

*The  
Globe Hollow  
Mystery*

HANNAH GARTLAND











# THE GLOBE HOLLOW MYSTERY



# THE GLOBE HOLLOW MYSTERY

BY  
HANNAH GARTLAND

AUTHOR OF  
"THE HOUSE OF CARDS"



NEW YORK  
DODD, MEAD AND COMPANY  
1923

*copy 2*



PZ 3  
G 1979  
G 2  
copy 12

COPYRIGHT, 1923,  
BY DODD, MEAD AND COMPANY, INC. ✓

Price \$1.50



PRINTED IN THE U. S. A. BY  
The Quinn & Boden Company  
BOOK MANUFACTURERS  
RAHWAY NEW JERSEY

FEB 15 '23 ✓ R  
© Cl A 696377

no 2

# CONTENTS

CHAPTER		PAGE
I	THE HOUSE OF MYSTERY . . . . .	1
II	OLD JASPER MAKES A WILL . . . . .	14
III	THE FOUNTAIN OF YOUTH . . . . .	22
IV	OLD JASPER'S TRUNK . . . . .	30
V	GLOBE HOLLOW . . . . .	37
VI	THE SPEAKING PORTRAIT . . . . .	47
VII	BRIDE OR REFUGEE . . . . .	56
VIII	A FINANCIAL DIFFICULTY . . . . .	68
IX	THE TRAGEDY . . . . .	78
X	OUTWITTING THE GHOST . . . . .	90
XI	THE WILL IS READ . . . . .	100
XII	AN EAVESDROPPER . . . . .	110
XIII	TRESPASS . . . . .	123
XIV	ELEANOR VISITS THE LAWYER . . . . .	128
XV	A THEORY ABOUT THE GHOST . . . . .	141
XVI	THE CASE AGAINST CHARLES . . . . .	147
XVII	MISTAKEN IDENTITY . . . . .	156
XVIII	A CONNECTING LINK . . . . .	167
XIX	WHO IS CHARLES BOWEN? . . . . .	175
XX	BILL HAWKINS HAS HIS TROUBLES . . . . .	183
XXI	A LUMBERMAN VISITS GLOBE HOLLOW . . . . .	191
XXII	BILL RELIEVES HIS MIND . . . . .	201
XXIII	OLD JASPER'S BEDROOM . . . . .	208
XXIV	THE JEWELLED MATCH-BOX . . . . .	217
XXV	THE THIRD DEGREE . . . . .	222
XXVI	OUTWITTED . . . . .	234
XXVII	MORE THAN ONE WAY . . . . .	242
XXVIII	THE BATTLE OF THE JAW BONE . . . . .	253
XXIX	COMING EVENTS CAST SHADOWS . . . . .	261
XXX	AN IMPATIENT BRIDEGROOM . . . . .	268
XXXI	WILL YOU WALK INTO MY PARLOR? . . . . .	280
XXXII	A LONG WAIT . . . . .	290





# THE GLOBE HOLLOW MYSTERY



# THE GLOBE HOLLOW MYSTERY

## CHAPTER I

### THE HOUSE OF MYSTERY

**T**HERE were those who said afterwards that the decaying old mansion of brick and brown stone, with its high iron railing inclosing a spacious and neglected garden harboring a few decadent elms and maples and a mass of sprangly syringa shrubs, had always borne an evil name; and that its present occupant, old Jasper Bowen, miserly, morose, and solitary, had intensified rather than lessened its unsavory reputation.

They affirmed that this was not the first time that strange things had happened in the mysterious old house whose shutters on the lower floor were never removed, and whose interior no man had seen for years upon years.

When the culmination of a new series of events brought it again into prominence, stories were circulated that many times before had the stillness



## 2 THE GLOBE HOLLOW MYSTERY

of the night been broken by muffled sounds of weird laughter issuing from behind the tightly shuttered windows. And there was revived an ancient legend that three gaunt sisters, utterly nude and stark mad, used to wander ceaselessly through the upper chambers and that three pairs of burning, hollow eyes set in ghastly, pallid faces had often been seen peering through the iron gratings that covered the windows on the top floor.

But it was only after old Jasper's mysterious disappearance and the subsequent events connected with it that these stories were circulated by those who scoffed at the evidence in the case, and refused to believe that the detectives ever got to the bottom of the mystery.

Certain it is that the old place had long since ceased to attract the attention of any one but visiting strangers on the tops of Fifth Avenue stages or sightseeing automobiles, who could not fail to marvel at the sight of the ancient mansion standing, neglected and forlorn, among the marble palaces of trade. For the rising tide of commerce had swept northward up the broad avenue and overwhelmed all the other ugly but palatial homes of the millionaires of a former generation.

There were skeptics who declared that the thrilling tales claiming a traditional background were invented by megaphone-shouting conductors on the tourist cars to satisfy the curiosity of visitors bent on getting their dollar's worth out of their

trip around the city; and that old Jasper Bowen had nothing to his discredit other than that he was a miser and a recluse.

Be that as it may, just when the real-estate agents, impatiently waiting to get their hands on the most valuable plot on the Avenue, expected the old mansion to turn its face to the wall and decently die, it became suddenly resuscitated. This phenomenon followed immediately after the appearance of an undertaker, and the succeeding disappearance of the old servant, the only person who had accompanied Jasper Bowen when, years ago, he had appeared and taken up his residence in his newly inherited house—a man as strange, as silent, and as mysterious as his master.

Following close upon the undertaker's departure, there appeared before the house one morning, a ruddy-faced, smiling Irishman carrying a ladder. This he placed before a shuttered window, and mounting it, he proceeded to remove the shutters. The long confined windows blinked in the unaccustomed light like a man suddenly issuing from the deepest dungeon in the Doge's palace. Then the man opened the front door, and the imaginative declared that the cold, dank, long-confined air escaping therefrom perceptibly lowered the temperature on the Avenue.

Presently two vans arrived with furniture which was transferred to the house. A few days later a taxi drew up before the iron-grilled gateway,

## 4 THE GLOBE HOLLOW MYSTERY

and a young woman, handsome, and smartly dressed, alighted; and with the air of a modern and self-reliant woman of the world, gave directions to the driver to take a large wardrobe trunk from the cab to the house. The long unused hinges of the ancient door creaked protestingly—and perhaps warningly, who knows?—as her well-shod feet crossed the threshold—the first woman's foot for a generation to disturb its unhallowed dust.

It was, perhaps, four months later that another taxi drew up at the same spot; and the grilled gate opened, and the old door swung again on its hinges, this time to admit a young man, as good-looking, as smartly dressed, and as up-to-date as the young woman who had preceded him. And both, in their youthful freshness, were as opposed to the traditional gloom of the house as sunlight is to darkness.

Soon it was rumored that the heirs were beginning to arrive. The young man took up his residence in the Vanderbilt, an exclusive bachelor apartment, and registered as Charles Yancey Bowen, the nephew and only male heir to the Bowen estate. Though not known personally in New York, his name was familiar because of his famous exploits as an aviator in France, and whose reported death in action had caused universal sorrow. Apparently old Jasper supplied him liberally with money; and if he felt any im-



patience with his uncle for not immediately taking his departure from a world of troubles after satisfying himself that his money would be left in good hands, he did not show it.

How the girl was faring was not so well known. At first she had gone out shopping, and driving, and deported herself like any ordinary, normal young woman. When Charles came she had gone to the theater with him, and to after-theater suppers, and was sometimes seen with him of an afternoon in the Waldorf tea-room. But the intervals between the times she was seen out grew longer, and finally she did not appear at all.

It was about this time that the tales of the three gaunt sisters began to circulate.

Meanwhile the rooms in the old house had been restored to a semblance of their original intention. Dennis, the ruddy-faced Irishman who had removed the shutters, and Ann, his spouse, had cleaned and partially restored some of the neglected rooms, and arranged in them the furniture which they had cared for for years in the girl's home in Denver, and which she had brought with her along with the two servants when she came to make her home with her uncle.

One morning, a month or so after Charles's arrival, Ann was engaged in her domestic duties in the kitchen when Dennis emerged from the butler's pantry carrying a heavy tray of assorted table silver.

“To-day is Friday, Ann,” he reminded her as he deposited his burden on the kitchen table, “have you polished the Queen Anne silver tanker yet?”

“Have I polished the Queen Anne silver tanker, yet, says you, Dennis Mahoney,” retorted Ann promptly, in conjugal tones devoid of any irritation, “and well you know ’tis yourself that polishes the Queen Anne silver tanker every Friday of your life, after you are done with your foolishness of asking me foolish questions about it. Sure, ’tis yourself is butler in this house, and not me; and ’tis too often I have to be tellin’ you that same.” She laid down her dish towel complacently, and carefully placed the china and silver she had been washing on a well-worn lacquered tray.

“And ’tis quite as often, Ann,” said Dennis, mildly, “that I have to be remindin’ you that a butler in a gentleman’s house should not polish the silver with his own hands, but should leave that same to his subordinates. He should keep a careful eye on it, I grant you, and see that ’tis properly done; but to do it with his own hands is beneath his dignity.”

He transferred the pieces, with a becoming assertion of the importance of his position, from the tray to the table.

“And when did you ever hear, Mr. Butler, if you don’t mind informin’ me,” retorted Ann, im-

itating his manner, “of a lady housekeeper in a gentleman’s family cookin’ the food with her own hands, and scrubbin’ the pots and pans and kettles, and sweeping the floors, and making the beds, and dusting the brickbacks an’ all, let alone being the butler’s subordinate and polishin’ the silver? Tell me that now, Dennis Mahoney.”

“I can give you the retort curchus to that, Ann,” said Dennis triumphantly. “’Tis little enough of cookin’ you have to do in this house, where there’s two lamb chops provided for the dinner for three people, and if I didn’t buy a stewin’ piece at the butcher’s for ourselves now and then, ’tis no cookin’ at all you’d do for yourself and me.”

He selected a fish knife from the mass before him and ruefully surveyed the remaining pieces.

“’Tis no denyin’,” said Ann, who followed his glance sympathetically, “that there’s altogether too much silver to be cleaned for the amount of food that goes to the table. That big silver platter for the wee bit of a chop for Miss Eleanor; and all the covered dishes with next to nothing in them; and the cream pitcher for a spoonful of condensed milk; and all the flat pieces laid out every time as if we were giving a course dinner, when, to tell you God’s truth, ’tis hard enough I’ve found it many a day to scrape up anything to put on the dishes. If I wasn’t sorry for poor Miss Eleanor I couldn’t do it.”



“Aye, you have me there, Ann,” said Dennis, surveying the polish on the fish-knife with satisfaction, “for it tears the heart out of me to stand behind her chair in the big dining-room and look across the top of her head at her father’s portrait, God rest his soul, looking down on her wan, pitiful face from his frame on the opposite wall, and watching her big, mournful eyes looking hungrily at a chop-bone you might throw to a dog. ’Tis little enough serving I have to do, and I often watch the portrait. Oftentimes of late it seems as if he was trying to talk to me. Sometimes I can actually see the lips moving, saying, ‘Why don’t ye be doin’ something, Dennis, why don’t ye be doin’ something?’ ”

“And what could you be doin’, then, I want to know,” quickly retorted Ann, “barrin’ that you mixed up the trays and took the uncle’s dinner to her? ’Twould do him good, once,” she admitted, “to have to eat what he provides for her. Only, to do him justice, ’tis little enough himself is eating these days.”

“Well, to give the devil his due, he’s old and sick, and ye can’t hold him strictly accountable,” said Dennis.

“Hut! Sick, is it?” ejaculated Ann. “Well, then, I’ll tell him to his teeth, ’tis more than himself will be sick in this house if that poor thing doesn’t have more food to her stomach.” She wrung out her dish-towels with a muscular

strength suggestive of a desire to apply it to another use. "And what's he keeping his money for anyway, him with one foot in the grave?" she continued, as she snapped out the towels and placed them on a rack to dry. "He's not so fond of Mr. Charles that he need be keepin' it for him, and well he knows he can't buy his way through Purgatory with it."

"You mean that Mr. Charles is not so fond of him," corrected Dennis. "Do you mind taking a hand at the tanker now, Ann, mavourneen—now that your dishes are done?" He ingratiatingly placed the polish near her, and before she was aware that Dennis had, with his usual success, inveigled her into doing the task which he detested, she had a brush in her hand and was vigorously attacking the tankard.

"Speaking of Mr. Charles, now," Dennis continued hastily, to divert Ann from the discovery of her fall from lady housekeeper to assistant butler, "'tis not easy for me to keep from knowin' a bit of what's going on upstairs, being Mr. Bowen's valet, and nurse, and doctor, and chambermaid, and wan thing and another, and I happen to know that he wants Mr. Charles to come and live here in this house with him and manage his money."

"Hut! money, says you," snorted Ann, "all the money he'd see you could put in the eye of a green fairy on Camperdown heath. Don't you

## 10 THE GLOBE HOLLOW MYSTERY

manage his money for him now? And little more than that would Mr. Charles ever see."

"It's his estate I'm referrin' to, Ann," explained Dennis patronizingly, "not the miserly pittance he doles out to me for the runnin' of the house. He'd like Mr. Charles to be his rent-collector, and his coupon-cutter, and his legal adviser, and his errand boy, and his secretary, and—and plenty of other things he could think of—for you and I know that he has a way with him for combining the duties of his employees. You see in that way he'd have all them brains with only one stomach, and by tellin' him he's going to be his heir he thinks to keep Mr. Charles from askin' any salary."

"Oh, well, if it's his estate you mean," said Ann, mollified, "why doesn't Mr. Charles do as his uncle wishes? The old man is not long for this world anyway, and Mr. Charles is not fit to do a man's job, what with the gassin' and this and that he got done to him in the war."

"And why not, indeed? 'Tis surprised I am at you, Ann," said Dennis, reprovingly. "Is it so fond of livin' in this house you are yourself that you'd be wishin' it on Mr. Charles, and him with medals enough to cover a parade ground? And how many times do I have to be tellin' you that Mr. Charles was not gassed—'twas an aviator he was, and aviators had no call to get gassed. It was in a prison camp he was, and reported for



dead after he was seen to bring down fourteen army planes—”

“Wurra, don’t be tellin’ me that story again, man. ’Twas four planes it was when first you told it; and well I know he *was* gassed. Do you think them haythen Germans would keep him a prisoner all them months and not gas him? I wouldn’t put it past them to gas him every day—not oncet but twicet. Mind the powder you’re droppin’ on the floor there, Dennis.”

Dennis, thus admonished, pulled the polishing board forward toward the edge of the table, and withdrew the chamois skin from his pocket where he had absent-mindedly placed it.

“ ’Tis plain to be seen,” he began importantly to Ann, who was turning off two pieces of silver to his one, “that you, being a woman, don’t understand what is meant by gassin’. Now—”

“Well, I don’t need to understand the manner of it when I can see the consequences,” she interrupted. “Mr. Charles is not the same man he was at all, at all.”

“And how do you know that, I’d like to know, and you never seeing him since he was a lad in pinafores?” he retorted.

“Well, I’ve heard of him, I’m tellin’ you, and didn’t the newspapers tell all about his glorious deeds as they called them? If Mr. Charles was ever a decent lad, then ’tis shell-shock from the gassin’ he must be havin’ now; for well you know

his actions in this house is anythin' but 'glorious deeds.' "

Ann nearly wrenched the spout of the coffee-pot off to give emphasis to her opinion.

"And what do you know of his actions, you that rarely see him since he doesn't live in the house at all, but has his own lodgin's in the best of style at the Vanderbilt?" objected Dennis, less annoyed at her persistence than his words implied.

"Is it what do I know about his actions, says you?" she sniffed scornfully. "Hut! I know that before he came to this house Miss Eleanor had enough to eat and to spare; and her uncle was good to her and he didn't shut himself up in his room and refuse to speak to her. And I know more than that, too. She's afraid. The poor young thing has a look in her eyes that betokens she is worrying over somethin' more than an empty stomach. You can put that in your pipe and smoke it, Mr. Butler," she declared emphatically.

Ann's deft fingers could keep pace with her tongue, and as she placed the last piece of the polished silver on the tray she added, "I've been notin' of late you have something on your mind you've not divulged to me, and 'tis well you know, Dennis Mahoney, you'll make a mess of anything you meddle in without my advice. You know well there's something wrong goin' on upstairs. You're as jumpy this morning as a rab-

bit. Lave off polishin' your nose with the chamois skin now, and take the silver to the dining-room."

Dennis obeyed with alacrity.

"How can I tell her what I don't know myself?" he muttered as he made his retreat with the tray. "I told her all I know positive. 'Twas only this morning the portrait spoke to me as if he was a livin' man: 'I'm depending on you, Dennis,' he said. 'Keep your eyes open, man, keep your eyes open!' But 'tis no good in tellin' Ann that."

He placed the silver on the sideboard and, casting a furtive glance at the door to assure himself that Ann was not watching, he went and stood before the portrait. It was that of a man in the late thirties, with eyes which the painter had made peculiarly vital. Dennis gazed steadily at the compelling features, and presently his flesh began to tingle. "'Tis not mistaken I am," he said. "He's surely implorin' me to do something. 'There's something wrong goin' on,' he says. 'Keep your eyes open, Dennis, keep your eyes open!'"



## CHAPTER II

### OLD JASPER MAKES A WILL

**W**HILE Dennis was still weighing the significance of the message from the portrait, he was startled by the sound of a bell indicating a call from the library. He was wondering who could be calling from that little-used room. Miss Eleanor never called from there, and the master of the house, Jasper Bowen, had been confined to his room above stairs for the last six weeks. Dennis was still speculating on the unusual occurrence when he reached the door.

The library was a long, somber, and forbidding room at its best, but now it was bathed in almost twilight gloom. The blinds were closed, and what light there was filtered in through the shutters and fell upon the back of an old man seated at a high, old-fashioned *escritoire* at the opposite end of the room. Scattered about him in confusion, on the floor, and covering the desk, were papers apparently discarded in a frantic search for something more important.

The gaunt figure was clad in a yellow flowered dressing-gown, and over his bald crown was stretched a close-fitting stockinette cap of the

same color. His lean, jaundiced hands clutched a sheaf of papers bound with a faded green ribbon. Before Dennis reached his side, the old man addressed him in a raucous voice without raising his head or removing his eyes from the sheaf of papers in his hands.

“Dennis,” he said, “I want you to telephone to Thornton and Bromley, and tell them to send a man up immediately to draw up a will. Tell ’em I don’t want any delay about it either, and I don’t want any of their fool clerks—I want Mr. Thornton. And then make it your business to see that my fastidious niece isn’t hanging about. She might come in here and be shocked at my unconventional costume.” An indescribable sneer accompanied these last words.

Dennis was at a loss, momentarily, for words; so great was his astonishment to see his master downstairs, sitting at a desk transacting business—Jasper Bowen, who had been unable for weeks to leave his room unaided, and whose sudden death from heart failure he had been led momentarily to expect.

“But you’re not able to be downstairs, sir,” he objected when he at last found his voice. “Let me help you back to your room and bring the lawyer to you there.”

“You do as I tell you,” snapped the old man testily. “I’m able to do my own thinking yet if I’m not very steady on my legs.”

Dennis reluctantly departed to carry out his orders, and when he returned he found the crabbed old man where he had left him, his fingers tapping nervously the arm of his chair.

“Dennis,” he said, abruptly, “what would you think if I should tell you I’m going to travel? Do you get that, Dennis? *Travel!*”

He paused to observe, with malicious amusement, the bewilderment depicted on Dennis’s round and ruddy countenance. “Your intelligent expression would do credit to a Kewpie doll,” he continued. “Nevertheless, I must express myself, and you will do as well as another—perhaps better—because you know that I’ve often tried of late to get my nephew to come and live with me, and take care of me in my declining years. I don’t see why a young man should decline a chance to become my heir, unless it is the natural objection of youth to be harnessed up with infirmity and age.” He seemed now to be talking to himself rather than to Dennis. “But if I go away and get my health back, I’ll be a companion to him. I’m not really an old man.” He straightened his shoulders and threw forward a hollow chest in vain imitation of youth. “So I’m going to a sanitarium, and get baths, and electric treatment, and violet rays, and quaff from the fountain of youth, Dennis, my boy! I feel younger already, just to hear myself talk about it.” He waved his scrawny hand jauntily in the air, the sleeve of his



yellow dressing-gown flapping like the wing of some bird of prey. Dennis regarded him with a mixture of wonder and distress.

“And how about Ann, sir?” he ventured. “Will it be for long that we’ll be leaving her?”

“Don’t anticipate trouble, Dennis, if you call it trouble to get away from a woman. That supreme state of bliss has been variously called Paradise, Elysium, Valhalla, the Happy Hunting Grounds; but if you don’t know it, why enlighten you?” he said sarcastically. “I’m not going to take you with me,” he continued. “Mr. Charles will go with me and see me safely installed, and then there will be plenty of attendants standing around waiting for my money. Don’t let that worry you, Dennis—no man with money ever lacks service. They’ll be around me as thick as buzzards after carrion.” His scrawny fingers with their yellow nails, picked at his shriveled throat and he emitted a raucous laugh that ended in a hollow cough.

When he had recovered, he continued, “You never can tell what’s going to happen to you when you travel. If you don’t get run down by some fool automobile on your way to the station, the train will do its best to land you in a ditch and break your neck; so I’m going to make my will by way of precaution before I go.” He replaced a sheaf of papers in a pigeon hole of the desk, and then turned and faced Dennis.

“While I’m away Mr. Charles will be master here, and I expect you to serve him as faithfully as you have me.” His tone and manner abruptly changed. “I am making liberal provision for you and Ann. In case anything should happen to me, you’ll have enough to live comfortably on the rest of your lives,” he said impressively.

“Thank you, sir,” said Dennis, dropping his eyes lest the old man should see his surprise at any generosity emanating from that source. “We’ll try to deserve your kindness, sir, the both of us.”

“You’d better try, and try hard. You won’t miss anything by carrying out my wishes to the letter—to *the letter*. Remember that, my man,” charged the old man harshly.

Dennis winced at the words “my man.” He had never been called that before and he didn’t like it. Old Jasper was growing more eccentric every day. He was often irascible, and always petty and sarcastic, but to-day he was expressing himself in a new vocabulary which had in it a peculiarly disagreeable sting. He’d be glad to take orders from Mr. Charles, so he would. Then a sudden thought startled him. How about Miss Eleanor? Fortunately for his bemuddled brain, the doorbell announced the arrival of the lawyer. He responded with alacrity, glad of any diversion to escape from the presence of this astounding man, whose sudden death would not have sur-

prised him, but whose sudden coming to life was too startling a phenomenon for him to comprehend.

Into the cheerless library he ushered the lawyer, who had to pause a moment to accustom his eyes to the gloomy interior. Old Jasper did not rise to greet him, but addressed him without ceremony.

“Have you brought a blank form with you?”

“Yes, certainly, Mr. Bowen, your man indicated the nature of the business I was called for,” replied the lawyer courteously. He was approaching the escritoire where old Jasper still sat when the latter broke forth irritably:

“Don’t bring it over here! I have all the mess I want on this desk now. Sit down at that table over there and draw it up.” He pointed to a large, flat-topped library table in the center of the room. “Dennis, I’ll call you when I want you. Go around the corner and bring your butcher in for a witness, and somebody else—anybody—go along with you!” He made a gesture of dismissal, and the yellow sleeve floated ominously in the air again.

The will was duly drawn, with no unnecessary words on either side; the lawyer offended at the discourtesy shown him, and old Jasper quite indifferent to anything but the business in hand. When it was ready for the signature, the lawyer rose and approached the testator. “Give it to



Dennis," snapped the old man irritably, "and, Dennis, what are you looking at me like that for, as if you think I'm too feeble to hold a pen?" He snatched the paper from Dennis's hand and laid it on the desk at which he was sitting.

"Hell's bells!" he grumbled. "As if it wasn't humiliating enough for myself to see my old hand shake without having you young fellows looking on sniggering."

He made a great show of dashing off the signature, but the letters trailed out slowly and waveringly under the pen. He used a blotter, his hand shaking in spite of himself, after which he scanned the signature carefully. Then he handed the paper back to Dennis and craftily watched the witnesses while they wrote their signatures in the spaces indicated by the lawyer.

"Now, is that legal?" he inquired in his rudest manner, addressing the lawyer, "or have you followed the custom of most of the gentlemen of your profession and left a flaw in it so you can get another fee for pointing out the flaw to fake heirs?"

"It is a simple matter to destroy it, and you're quite at liberty to do so," replied the lawyer icily. "I will bid you good day," and without further words he departed, the two strange witnesses following him from the room.

When they were quite out of sight, the old man rose and tottered a few steps toward the door,

chuckling maliciously. Dennis sprang to assist him, but he was in no mood to be assisted. He indignantly spurned Dennis's offer, and made his way to the staircase unaided, Dennis watching him apprehensively the while.

"I came down alone and I will go up alone," he declared crabbedly. He seized the railing and painfully mounted the first stair. When, with much difficulty, he had succeeded in making the second, he looked around, and, seeing Dennis watching him, he snarled:

"Get out of my sight; you make me nervous! I tell you from now on I'm a well man and I'm going to walk alone. I won't have you standing around waiting to pick me up. Get out of this, I tell you, or I'll take my stick to you!" He raised his cane in a threatening attitude, whereupon Dennis retreated hastily to the dining-room. There he waited for a few moments, expecting to hear a call for help. Failing to get the expected summons, he retreated to the kitchen to propitiate Ann by relating to her the latest whim of his eccentric master.

"Is it leavin' the house he is after these twenty years and more!" exclaimed Ann. "Sure the fresh air will get into his lungs and smother him like it does a fish. You mark my words, Dennis, he'll never come back to this house a livin' man. You remember what I'm tellin' you."

"I wonder, now—I wonder—" said Dennis.

## CHAPTER III

### THE FOUNTAIN OF YOUTH

DENNIS had hardly ceased wondering when he was startled by a peal from the front doorbell.

“What’s on you, man, that you’re so jumpy this morning?” said Ann. “Sure ’tis nothin’ to make your eyes pop out of your head to hear the doorbell ringin’; though I’ll grant you,” she admitted fairly, “ ’tis seldom enough you do be hearin’ the same.”

At the sound of the bell, Dennis had hastily reached for his coat, which he had removed on his return from his duties in the library. With his fingers still busy with the buttons, he was on his way to answer the summons when he heard the sound of Mr. Charles’s voice in the hall.

“Oh! Dennis,” he called out cheerily. “It’s only I, Mr. Charles. Well, I swear,” he laughed, at sight of the startled face of the serving man, “do you always look like that when you receive visitors, or haven’t you ever had one?” he bantered.

He was a graceful, medium-sized young man, clean-shaven and well-groomed. His features



were mobile and sensitive, the chin only tending to sharpness of outline. His skin was somewhat pallid from the confinement in a German prison camp; and he wore, temporarily, amber-colored glasses. He wore his well-tailored clothes with easy grace. His voice was exceedingly pleasant, his movements alert, and he brought with him into the gloomy house something suggestive of the brilliant sunshine and fresh atmosphere from which he had just emerged. His manner in chaffing Dennis was mischievous and boyish.

“I thought it would surprise you,” he laughed, “to hear the old bell jangle—in fact, I wasn’t sure it would take the trouble to rouse its lazy self to that extent. And now your eyes are asking me why I rang when I always come and go just as if I lived here. Well, the truth is, I wanted to talk to you, Dennis,” he continued more seriously. “What’s this cock-and-bull story of Uncle Jasper going in search of the fountain of youth, and leaving me here to look after his crazy old house which I wouldn’t take for a gift?”

“And how did you hear of it so soon, Mr. Charles?” asked Dennis in wonder. “ ’Tisn’t more than ten minutes since the lawyer left.”

“Oh, then, there really has been a lawyer here, has there?” said Charles, his tone manifesting his surprise. “Uncle Jasper told me some crazy tale to that effect last night before I left him, but I thought it was another ruse to get me to

come and live with him. *Live* here? In this tomb?" He glanced around at the somber walls, the worn carpets and the forbidding doors leading to the various rooms from the hall where they stood, and he shrugged his shoulders, accompanying the movement with a little shiver indicative of youthful repudiation of somberness and gloom in any form.

"I'm surprised," he said, after a pause, "that he admitted a stranger to his room. I thought you and I were the only privileged characters there."

"He didn't admit him to his room," said Dennis. "He received him in the library."

"In the library!" exclaimed Charles. "How in the world did you ever get him down there?"

"I didn't get him down; he came down himself," explained Dennis.

Mr. Charles turned amazed eyes on Dennis. "Is he in there now? Or did you get him back to his room?" he asked.

"Neither, Mr. Charles. You'll scarcely believe it, but 'twas all by himself he went, and he threatened me with his cane for offering to help him," explained the nonplused Dennis.

Mr. Charles regarded him a moment, and then broke into laughter.

"That only goes to prove what I've sometimes suspected," he said, "and that is that he is not so helpless as he would have us believe—foxy old

Uncle Jasper! How far do you think he's going to carry this thing, Dennis? What do you think is his next move?"

"I think he really means to go, Mr. Charles," said Dennis, with conviction. "You mind that you told me he wanted his trunk brought to his room last night, and the both of us thought it was out of his head he was, but I brought it down to humor him and left it standing in the hall outside his door. And it's out of his head he may be yet for all I know."

"Did he seem all right when you took him his breakfast?"

"He wouldn't let me in, but he called to me that he would ring when he wanted me, and the next I knew he was ringing from the library. There's nothing to do, of course, but to humor him, but he has me guessing this time."

"Well, let's go up and see how he feels after his extraordinary adventure." Charles moved toward the stairs, but Dennis hesitated.

"Excuse me, Mr. Charles," he explained. "Mr. Bowen was vexed with me for offering to assist him up the stairs, and he threatened me with his cane if I went near him again without orders."

"He did, did he?" laughed Charles. "Well, then, come up and stand by while I take the bull by the horns. Who knows but he'll toss me out?"



Dennis followed his leader up the stairway, but stood at a respectful distance from his master's door, which was the one leading into the first room at the left of the staircase. Mr. Charles tapped on the door and opened it a crack without waiting for a reply.

"Who's that?" came the familiar, harsh tones from inside. "Dennis, didn't I tell you I'd beat you to a pulp if you offered me any more of your unrequired services? Be off with you."

"Good morning, Uncle Jasper," called out Charles, cheerfully, cautiously pushing the door further open and standing on the threshold, his hand still holding the door-knob, "that's a cordial way to greet a loving nephew who comes to call on a sick uncle. You sound like a blood-thirsty pugilist."

At this the old man emitted horrible, cacophonous sounds, which were meant for laughter—Dennis always hated to hear him laugh. It was, at its best, ghastly, but there was some quality in it this morning, malicious, triumphant, ominous, which made Dennis turn around and glance down the stairway as if to assure himself there was nothing sinister behind him, much as he used to do in his childhood when he had to pass a graveyard at twilight. Mr. Charles had steadier nerves, however. He had heard more terrifying sounds in his recent experiences than an old

man's laughter. He turned an amused countenance to Dennis, held up his hand significantly, twirled his fingers, and waved a gesture of dismissal. Then he disappeared into his uncle's room, and the door closed behind him.

Dennis stood a moment gazing at the closed door; but he was reminded of his duties immediately by feeling a draft coming from somewhere. He went to the front of the hall and closed a window. When he returned and passed old Jasper's door, he heard the two men conversing. Then he passed on down the stairway and returned to the kitchen.

Ann was preparing lunch and making her usual caustic remarks about the meagerness of Miss Eleanor's menu contrasted with the abundance of old Jasper's.

"Whatever's on the man, I don't know. Yesterday you brought down the most of what I sent up, and to-day 'tis a full meal he wants. Very likely the most of that will come down again and it not fit for any one to eat, and all the while Miss Eleanor pinin' away for want of nourishin' food. I hope to my God a judgment will fall on him, so I do!"

"You have no call to be cursin' him, Ann," protested Dennis mildly. "The judgment of God will fall where it will. He took his stick to me for offering to help him up the stairs, and if he falls and breaks his old bones, 'twill be nothin'



but the judgment of God on him, and no blame to me.”

He busied himself about the kitchen while telling Ann the events of the morning, and was busy in the dining-room later laying the cloth for Miss Eleanor’s luncheon when Mr. Charles came in.

“Well, Dennis,” he said somewhat excitedly, “he really means to go. He has made arrangements to go to some crazy place up in the Connecticut hills, so there’s nothing for us to do but to get him off as comfortably as we can. He is determined to go this afternoon. There’s a train leaving the Grand Central somewhere around 4:30, I think. You’ll have to see him off, for I have an engagement I can’t break. I’ll pack his trunk. Then I’ll get him dressed and as presentable as possible, and you must do the rest.”

“And his tickets and reservations, Mr. Charles. Shall I attend to them?”

“Yes, as soon as you have served Miss Eleanor’s lunch, go out and attend to it. Get a state-room if you can. Here’s the name of the station on this card, Smithville, Connecticut, and here is the money. This will cover the taxi fare and pay the expressman—oh, yes! I nearly forgot the trunk. Take it with you in the taxi when you take him to the station, and don’t forget to give the check to Uncle Jasper. Can you remember all that?” He smiled pleasantly as he handed the card and money to Dennis.

“I’ve done more than that for the family, many’s the time,” said Dennis, with dignity, handling the bills with easy familiarity, “and I have yet to see the first time I’ve lost my head.”

Charles smiled winningly. “That’s why I’m trusting you now, you know.”

Dennis was mollified. “Are you staying to take luncheon with Miss Eleanor?” he said, and quaked in his boots for fear he would declare his intention of so doing.

“No, Dennis, thank you. That’s too much to ask of any able-bodied man. Do you think I’m a canary? I know Miss Eleanor’s menu as well as you do, and you know I’d get poor pickings there, if your table does look as though you were giving a banquet. Queer notion that of Uncle Jasper, to feast her eyes with silver and fine linen and starve her body. Well, I’ll be going. You’ll serve Uncle’s lunch as usual. He has recovered from the affront you gave to his pride.”

He passed out of the dining-room, and Dennis heard him humming:

“Jog on, jog on, the footpath way,  
And merrily hent the stile-a;  
A merry heart goes all the way,  
Your sad tires in a mile-a.”

## CHAPTER IV

### OLD JASPER'S TRUNK

**M**R. CHARLES was right. Old Jasper was extremely amiable when Dennis brought him his luncheon. He was still in his yellow dressing-gown and yellow cap, but his clothes were laid out on the bed ready to be donned later. He was in high spirits, and gave Dennis the impression of a man who had had a great burden lifted from his shoulders. He instructed Dennis to carry out all Mr. Charles's wishes to the letter, and hinted at ample reward in the future.

“And Miss Eleanor, sir?” Dennis ventured. “Will I get the allowance for her from Mr. Charles?”

The old man made a strange sound in his throat, and Dennis was afraid he was going to laugh again, but the sound resolved itself into a mild chuckle.

“Mr. Charles will see to everything—everything, Dennis, and I am confident he will be as liberal with Miss Eleanor as I have always been.” He was as bland as the quality of his cracked old voice would permit.

Dennis made no further conversation, but silently placed the dishes on the tray, straightened a chair or two, and left the room. He went below and served Miss Eleanor's luncheon, after which he and Ann ate theirs hurriedly in the servants' dining-room, but not so hurriedly that Ann could not indulge in a few reminiscences.

"And only yesterday you were tellin' me 'twas in his last sickness he was, and that he'd never rise from his bed again," she reminded him, pouring his tea from a plump, ivory-colored teapot embellished with scenes from the Vale of Glendalough.

"I did, indeed, tell you that same, Ann, and good reason I had to think it," he responded, taking the cup from her hand. "'Tis a miracle, and nothing more nor less."

"Well, mind your hand there. There's no need to be spillin' the tea all over the cloth. There'd be some sense in your shakin' if 'twas dead he was," said Ann complacently.

"I'm free to say to you that I'm as creepy as if there was actually a corpse in the house," he confessed despondently, stirring his tea violently to conceal the trembling of his hand. "I can't explain it, and I can't shake it off, and you can laugh at me if you're so disposed, so there!" he declared, compelled to relieve himself of the depression that had been hanging over him.

"Well, there's no call to be speakin' to me like



that, and you needn't be pokin' your spoon through the bottom of your cup. I understand you without all that to-do. 'Tis small wonder you're a bit upset with all this up and down, and down and up business. I wish to my God he'd do wan thing or another and be done with it. Have a bite of the cheese with your bread, man, and put a heart in you."

Assured of Ann's sympathy, which, to do her justice, she never withheld when he was in real need, he finished his meal with restored confidence. He was more composed when, a little before four o'clock, he ascended to old Jasper's room to announce the arrival of the taxicab.

Mr. Charles had assisted his uncle to dress, and a strange figure he presented. His thin form was concealed beneath a queerly cut black cloth cape under which appeared loosely hanging pantaloons encasing his spidery legs. On his head he wore a broad-brimmed Quaker hat, a size too large, giving the impression that his head had shrunk from its covering. A few straggling gray locks fell from beneath the brim and rested on the velvet collar of his cape.

He was pathetically nervous and unstrung. His hands trembled and he stumbled unseeingly on the edge of a rug. All the bravado of the morning was gone. He fidgeted nervously about his trunk and watched Dennis uneasily while he removed it to the corridor. There he bade him

leave it until he was ready to accompany it. He was uneasy about his wallet; he transferred it from one pocket to another, and then back again. At last he held it in both hands and appealingly approached Dennis. Glancing suspiciously about the room he whispered in his peculiarly repellent voice: "Take care of it for me until we get to the train. Everybody knows I am a rich man, and I'll be robbed—perhaps murdered," he shuddered. "There's a lot of money in it. What could I do if I were attacked on the way?"

Dennis felt the thick wallet being thrust into his hand, and all his instincts rebelled against taking responsibility for another man's money. But this man was so childish, so helpless, that Dennis indulgently yielded and placed the wallet in his inside pocket. Then old Jasper was ready to leave. On the threshold of the room he was leaving to take this eccentric journey, he turned and gave a long backward look. Then he bade Dennis lock the door behind them; after which he took the key and placed it carefully in his own pocket.

"Don't let anybody come in here and mess my things up while I'm away. Promise me that nobody shall come into this room. Nobody but Mr. Charles. You hear me, Dennis? Nobody but my dear nephew, Mr. Charles. Do you promise?" he asked eagerly, pressing Dennis's arm.

"Nobody but myself to clean it up a bit," Den-

nis soothingly assured him, "but how I'm to do that same without a key I don't know at all."

"I don't want it cleaned up until I come back, and then we'll have new furniture all over the house. My nephew will like that. We must do everything we can to please him, and then he won't go away and leave me again."

Anxiously he watched Dennis shoulder the trunk. Then following with his traveling bag in his hand he slowly descended the stairs, passed through the door which Ann held open for them, down the flight of stone steps and entered the taxi-cab.

Dennis, having disposed of the trunk, was about to place the traveling bag on the seat with the driver, but old Jasper called him.

"Dennis," he said, placing his gloved finger to his lips, "be cautious. Put the bag in with me!"

Dennis humored him, and placed the bag inside the cab with its owner.

"Do you want me to sit inside, too, sir?" he felt compelled to inquire; but for some unaccountable reason he devoutly hoped this service would not be required of him.

To his intense relief it was not. He mounted the seat of the cab beside the driver who steered the car into its place in the procession of motor cars and green omnibuses moving down the Avenue. Turning into Forty-second Street, they were held up by a traffic officer who was releasing auto-



mobiles from a blockade caused by a line of stalled surface cars. But, of all this, Dennis was scarcely conscious. The face of the portrait appeared before him, warning—cautioning him to be on his guard. His mind was in a most confused state when they drew up at the automobile entrance of the station.

He pulled himself together with an effort, and sprang down from his seat, paid the fare, and assisted his charge to alight. He half expected that the sight of the hurrying crowds, the swift and confusing movement of the numerous automobiles, together with that nameless thing about a crowded railway station that makes the hearts of the timid beat with nervous apprehension would intimidate the old man, and induce him to abandon his capricious journey, and return in the same cab that had brought him hither. But another surprise was in store for him. He had reckoned without sufficient knowledge of the resources of his erratic master. The excitement served to stimulate the flagging energy and put fresh vigor in the trembling limbs. He needed no assistance to alight, and he refused to enter the Pullman until he had personally seen his trunk placed in the baggage car.

“Trust a railroad just while your eye is on them,” he advised Dennis, who was vainly trying to assure him that the trunk would be properly cared for without his assistance. “Robbers,



every man Jack of them, from the president down. What they don't steal, they smash. I'll see that trunk put on properly myself. Julius Cæsar was right when he said: 'If you want a thing well done, do it yourself!' "

He watched the trunk with anxious interest while it was being transferred from the truck to the baggage-car. Then he was content to be led by Dennis to the Pullman and to be placed comfortably in the stateroom which had been reserved for him.

"Good-by," he said, as Dennis was about to leave him. "Be sure you look well after Mr. Charles."

Dennis reassured him on this point, then returned to the platform and waited until he saw the conductor give the signal and the train glide away.

## CHAPTER V

### GLOBE HOLLOW

**S**MITHVILLE was a junction where two important railway lines crossed; otherwise express trains would not have stopped at so unimportant a station. It lay in a flat valley with pleasantly smiling wooded hills rising to the north and eastward. The station itself with its adjoining warehouses was new and well kept. A trolley track stretching a mile or two to the northward indicated the direction of the village.

At train time there were always to be seen several "For Hire" automobiles waiting about the station, for there were many traveling salesmen alighting at this junction to visit the three small towns which lay in a triangle within easy driving distance.

At the close of a late September afternoon the usual collection of people were assembled at the station to await the arrival of the east-bound express. A couple of salesmen were chewing the ends of half-consumed cigars and lamenting the dullness of business. Two young women with suit-cases were, from time to time, impatiently consulting their wrist watches. A tired-looking

woman with a restless and inquisitive child, a few workmen, and the 'bus drivers comprised the rest of the group.

To while away the tedium of waiting, the hackmen were guying one of their number about a new vehicle—or rather a type of vehicle new to Smithville—which had, on its first appearance that day, roused their merriment. It was merely an ordinary taxicab, but in a community where a Ford touring car is the established convention for a 'bus, and where the rates are as fixed as the summer solstice—twenty-five cents to the village, two dollars to Harwood, and three to Middleton and return—the appearance of this strange equipage furnished sufficient grounds for mirth. Having exhausted their fund of jokes on the meter, Jo Mooney tapped a new source of humor.

“Was you 'fraid of them pretty school-teachers from the Normal School, Bill, that made you git a shet-up 'bus?”

A unanimous shout of laughter flattered the originator of this witty remark.

“Gosh!” ejaculated Jim Wheeler. “If I was one of them girls and had to ride with as humbly a man as Bill, I'd want him to have a shet-up 'bus.”

When the laughter from this sally had moderated, Jo Hawkins drew a coin from his pocket, and held it up jocosely between thumb and forefinger.

“Tell you what, Bill,” he offered, “I’ll bet you this dime to a copper that you won’t get a human bein’ to ride in your new-fangled contraption ’less all the other ’busses is crammed full.”

“I’ll take you,” responded Bill promptly. “Hold the stakes, Jim.” He drew a copper coin from his pocket and flipped it carelessly to Jim, who caught it deftly and demanded a coin from Jo.

Very few passengers alighted, but among them, carrying a goodly-sized traveling bag, was one who was as great an anomaly at the little country junction as Bill’s taxical. It was a sprightly little old man with remarkably keen, bright blue eyes, dressed in a manner strange even to eyes familiar with many novel costumes on the movie screen.

Two hours in a Pullman car had quite rejuvenated Uncle Jasper. He declined the porter’s offer to carry the traveling bag, and skipped quite briskly past the row of solicitous drivers to make a critical inspection of their cars.

“Whose car is that?” he sharply demanded, pointing a gloved forefinger at the maligned taxi.

Bill stepped forward, and acknowledged the ownership.

“This’ll do. Just right. I have a trunk. Can you take it in here?” demanded the passenger brusquely.

“Yes, sir,” said Bill respectfully, taking the



bag from his hand and depositing it in the car. "Step right in, sir. If you will give me your check, I will get the trunk for you."

The old man was holding the check in his hand, but he did not resign it to Bill.

"No, sir. I never trust my check to a stranger. I'll go with you and see that my trunk is properly salvaged from this predatory railroad company."

He stepped briskly along after Bill, who could not refrain from throwing a derisive look at his comrades as he passed them, and did not leave his side until he saw the trunk taken from the truck and properly released by the baggage man. His peculiar cape flapping about his thin body, the ill-fitting Quaker hat covering the tops of his ears and almost obscuring his face, together with his gesture of clasping and unclasping his gray suede fingers, excited the risibilities of the other cabmen, and Bill was hard put to it to retain his own gravity.

When he had the trunk loaded on the cab and the old gentleman safely installed inside, Bill walked over to the group, and holding out a broad palm said, with a grin: "I'll take the stakes, Jim."

"Not by a damsite," retorted Jo. "That ain't no human bein'."

Bill joined in the uproarious laughter that followed this witty retort, and then returned to his

cab and presented a very grave and respectful face to his fare.

“Where to, sir?” he inquired.

“Do you know where Globe Hollow is?” sharply demanded his passenger.

“Why, yes, sir,” replied Bill in surprise. “It’s about seven miles up yonder mountain road, but there ain’t nobody livin’ up there.”

“Who said I wanted to see ‘anybody living’?” snapped the passenger. “All I asked you was whether you know the way to Globe Hollow.”

“And I say I do know it all right,” explained Bill, “but I just want to tell you that there ain’t nothin’ up there but a coupla deserted woodcutters’ cabins. They been clearin’ up there for two or three years, but they got the wood mostly drawn off, and there ain’t been nobody livin’ up there this summer.”

“My friend,” said the old man sarcastically, “may I ask if the fact that there’s nobody been living there for two years precludes the possibility of anybody ever going there again?”

Bill pushed his hat forward on his brow and contemplatively scratched the back of his head. Finally light dawned on him.

“I reckon you’re aimin’ to go up to that artist colony that used to be up there. But ’tain’t there any more. The wood cutters used the cottages and they’ve cleared out all that spot where it used to be. Excuse me for tellin’ you, sir, but

I know it'll be only throwin' good money away to drive up there, for you'd only have to come back again. I'll have to charge you five dollars for that trip," Bill warned.

Old Jasper thrust his gloved hand inside the breast of his coat and drew forth his bulky wallet. He deliberately opened it and displayed a sheaf of yellow-backed bills.

"There's ten thousand dollars in that wad," he said impressively. "Now, do you think I can persuade you to stop haggling over the price, and get down to business and take me where I want to go without further argument?" His blue eyes flashed ominously at the recalcitrant cabman.

Bill fell back on his heels and gasped.

"Good Lord, a nut!" he said under his breath.

Bill was in a dilemma. If he took his passenger to the place to which he insisted on going, how could he come away and leave this demented old man in a God-forsaken place like Globe Hollow? But the laugh would be on him if he lost his passenger now. He resolved to drive on and seek a solution on the way.

The road ran parallel with the trolley track until they reached the village—once a charming, rural New England village, but now defaced with the débris from the paper mills—then they turned eastward on a good macadam road for a couple of miles. Presently they turned off the main



road into a little used thoroughfare which grew rough and still rougher as they proceeded. Deep ruts made by loaded wood-wagons in the spring-time retarded their progress; and many times old Jasper had difficulty in keeping his seat. The highways were bordered with tangled weeds and shrubs just catching the first touches of crimson and gold of autumn. All along the wayside the goldenrod nodded its graceful yellow head above the starry blue of the asters. Flocks of purple grackles vied with the busy goldfinches in picking the seeds and scarlet berries in the hedges.

Far up the climbing road, they passed a clearing where a bald, new house, together with a garden plot and a cow testified to the beginning of a home in the New World for the fair-haired Scandinavian, who, with his wife and two little children, watched them until they were out of sight.

At last, after dodging many deep ruts, and plunging unavoidably into others, they descended into the depressed, oval space that was known as Globe Hollow. All about them were the mangled stumps of trees, despoiled of their trunks to feed the greedy maw of a sawmill farther on. On the outer rim, and forming a background to the devastated tract, rose stunted pines and scrub oak and chestnut trees.

"This here place is what they call Globe Hollow," said Bill, halting his car and waving his



hand deprecatingly over the desolate landscape. His passenger made signs of dismounting.

"But this is *all* there is to it," objected Bill. "There ain't a stick or a stone in the old shack you see there. I brought a party up here fishin' in July and there wasn't as much as you could put in your eye in it then."

Bill was wasting his breath, for his passenger had stepped from the cab and was looking about him.

"God's good open," he breathed, sniffing the fragrant air. "You don't understand how any man in his senses could want to be left alone for a short space, do you, my man?" he said, turning to Bill. "Now, I'm in my senses. Don't make the mistake of thinking I'm demented. And I want to be alone. When you've seen as much of this damnable old world as I have, you'll think Globe Hollow is Paradise. Now, let's explore this shack and see what is here."

Bill followed him across the decayed threshold—there was no door. One glance was sufficient to see all there was there. A paneless window, a broken chair—three legs missing—and the inventory was complete.

"Now, I guess you'll be glad to go back with me," Bill said confidently.

"It isn't very inviting, I'll have to admit," said the old man, stepping out into the gathering twilight again. "But I'm going to stay here one

night and steep my soul in the blessed silence of the place. I have blankets, and food, and wine in my trunk. I shall make my bed here in the open, and under the silent stars I shall have one night of blessed, blessed peace. By the way," he asked suddenly, "you don't happen to have a bothersome niece, do you?"

Bill admitted that he was free from that particular trouble.

"Well, then, of course you wouldn't understand," he explained. "Now, you do understand that it is quite feasible for a man who wishes solitude to spend a night here in perfect safety, and in comparative comfort. Why, man, I feel my years dropping away from me already. I may stay here a year for all I know, and I shall, of course, want supplies. Can you bring me some bread and cheese to-morrow about 12 o'clock?"

"There's a train I have to make at 12:45," explained Bill, "but I could come right away after that, if that'll suit you."

"That will do perfectly. Don't come before that. I may sleep till noon." He drew forth his wallet again, and carefully extracted a bill which he handed to the driver. Bill's eyes bulged when he caught sight of the denomination.

"You see that it pays any one to serve me well," observed the old man significantly.

"A nut, escaped from the Middleton asylum, sure enough," thought Bill. "They'll be huntin'

the country over for him before I get here tomorrow."

"Well, I wish you a pleasant night of it, if you like this kind of a thing. Some does," he said aloud, placing the money rather reluctantly in his pocket. "But money is money," he said to himself, answering some inner compunction about taking money from a "nut."

He stepped into his car again, and waving a farewell to his passenger, he rolled away, leaving old Jasper alone with the blasted tree trunks, the mournful whippoorwills, and the falling night.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE SPEAKING PORTRAIT

**A**BOUT the time that Bill Hawkins was picking his way down the unfrequented mountain road, easing the strain on his car by avoiding the deep ruts whenever possible, and attempting to ease his mind of any responsibility for leaving the strange old man alone in the gloomy hollow, Eleanor Bowen was sitting in the chilly dining-room of the house called, by courtesy, her home; and Dennis was standing behind her chair.

An overhead flickering gas-light fell upon gleaming china carefully laid out on a rich damask cloth, and likewise on a solitary lamb chop stranded in a desert of silver platter. It lighted up, when the cover was removed, a single baked potato reposing in the capacious depths of a massive tureen. With crude impartiality, it discovered on the carved mahogany sideboard, a small, slightly spotted, plebeian red apple, the sole occupant of a superb Royal Doulton fruit dish.

These were the things that stood out conspicuously to Eleanor's eyes, for she was hungry; but she was beginning to see things in the strange



household for which she was not indebted to the gas-light. When the chop and potato had been disposed of, and the red peel of the apple was falling from her fingers and dropping in rosy curls on a crystal plate, she suddenly said:

“Dennis.”

“Yes, miss,” Dennis responded, startled at her tone.

“You seem very preoccupied of late,” she reminded him. “Have you anything on your mind?”

“Yes, miss,—no, miss,” he faltered.

She smiled thoughtfully, and ran the blade of her fruit knife around a brown spot on the side of the apple.

Dennis had spoken to Ann of Miss Eleanor’s pale face and melancholy eyes. It was true. She was pale, and there were dark circles under her blue-gray eyes, and there was a brooding trouble in their depths. But these were not evidences of constitutional frailness. She was only twenty-three, and she was virtually a prisoner in an ogre’s castle. She was starved—starved for food and for companionship.

Nearly six months ago, in response to an unaccountably delayed cable, she had returned from France, where she had been in the service, to find that her mother had died and that Uncle Jasper had administered the estate which Eleanor had always supposed to be ample, but which

Uncle Jasper informed her was insufficient to pay even the funeral expenses. He had morosely invited her to bring her furniture and two servants from her home in Denver—indeed they were in New York awaiting her when she arrived—and make her home with him. She had no other relative, and she had only vaguely heard her Uncle Jasper spoken of; but she discovered shortly after her arrival that she was the only heir to his estate, the only male heir having been killed in France in a heroic fight with a German airplane.

At first she had visions of being a daughter to this lonely old man who sorely needed care, and was prepared to bestow upon him the affection she had been wont to lavish upon her mother. She was appalled at the unsanitary condition of the house and at the old man's unhygienic manner of living, and she attempted to remedy both. She was quickly disillusioned. He repelled her advances, and constantly lamented the death of Charles, the last of the male line of Bowen.

Not that he loved Charles. He never loved anybody, and, moreover, he had never seen that young man. He had never encouraged visits from his relatives, being too suspicious of their motives. But now that he was awaiting a summons that he had reason to believe would be swift and sudden—a summons that grieved him more by the thought of what he was leaving than

of any dread of the future, the thought of divorcing the Bowen money from the Bowen name was gall and wormwood to him.

He had tolerated Eleanor under his roof, and instructed Dennis and Ann to look after her. But he let it be tacitly understood that his obligations ended there. He didn't care for her society. Indeed, he had been confined to his room during the last few weeks and she had led her solitary life apart from him. She had been physically comfortable until a month ago, when Charles had suddenly, as it were, risen from the dead and changed the whole state of things. The old man soon thereafter refused to see Eleanor at all. He grew more and more feeble each day, and, with the exception of Dennis and the doctor, he would see no one but his nephew. In order to hoard for Charles, he began to dole out money in increasingly smaller sums for Eleanor's maintenance; and, of late, had entirely withheld the not too liberal allowance of pocket money with which he had at first supplied her.

Charles deplored this state of affairs, and begged her, unavailingly, to accept an allowance from him. He assured her that Uncle Jasper, indulgent to him in every other way, turned adamantine ears to all his appeals for a more liberal treatment of her. But as Charles became increasingly kind, Uncle Jasper preserved the balance by growing more harsh and miserly.



She was grateful to Charles—or tried to be. She called herself a jealous hussy because she could not bring herself to respond more warmly to his proffered friendship. Some vague, elusive quality in his personality repelled her. She recalled him dimly as she had known him when they were children—a lovable boy with appealing brown eyes. Her conscience commanded her to overcome her aversion, but her instinct rebelled. She, therefore, avoided him as much as possible, for she had to exercise the greatest self-control not to make her aversion apparent.

And lately he had begun to make love to her. The situation was becoming intolerable, even under the nominal protection of her uncle; but now that Uncle Jasper, whose exhausted heart had held out many days beyond the doctor's prediction, had suddenly revived and taken this unaccountable journey, what position did it leave her in? It was time for her to pause and think to some purpose.

Dennis had been holding the finger-bowl for some time before she took notice of it. With a start, she dipped her fingers in the water, and while she was wiping them on a napkin, she fixed her eyes searchingly on Dennis's face.

"What did you say, Dennis?" she suddenly demanded.

"Nothing, miss. I said nothing, miss," he stammered.



"Oh, yes, you did," she contradicted, without removing her eyes from his face. "I asked you if you had something on your mind, and you said, 'Yes, miss—no, miss.' Now didn't you?"

"Yes, miss—no, miss," stammered the embarrassed butler. In the effort to get out of the range of her eyes, he dropped a napkin. He was deliberate and long about picking it up.

Eleanor was no medieval maiden languishing in a moated grange, but a very energetic and modern young woman. She had returned from her work overseas very much exhausted, and her apparent lassitude since she had been back was the resultant fatigue of her war experience, and was in no wise indicative of her normal temperament. Now a situation was arising which seemed to be bringing some sinister menace to her, and she knew that action of some kind was required of her. What kind of action she didn't know; but there was no harassing doubt in her mind as to *when* to begin. It was the present moment. Dennis, being conveniently at hand, she began with him.

"Dennis," she asked at random, by way of an opening, "how did Uncle Jasper stand the ride to the station?"

Dennis shook his head slowly from side to side before replying.

"If anybody had told me yesterday that he would ever rise from his bed again," he replied

deliberately, "I would have called the same a liar; all I can say to you, miss, is he was able to get on the train. Who knows whether he'll ever get off it?"

"What do you think his reason for taking this wild journey in his feeble state of health, and without his doctor's knowledge?" she pursued.

"'Tis past my knowledge to account for it, so it is, Miss Eleanor. He's been that strange since Mr. Charles came home that I don't know him myself half the time, if I do then, itself—and I after waitin' on him this six months." He continued to move his head dejectedly from side to side.

She looked at him, a trifle perplexed. "Just what do you mean—you don't know him?" she questioned.

"Well, that I can't explain to you," he replied, passing his hand over his brow, "for 'tis that same is puzzlin' me. 'Tis just the queer feelin' I have had all the day that 'tis not himself I'm waitin' on but some one else entirely. Every dog knows his own master, and doesn't have to be after puzzlin' it out, and here's myself—" He paused and glanced at the opposite wall. After a while he continued: "I suppose 'tis the portrait as does it."

"The portrait!" Eleanor repeated. Her wondering eyes followed his and rested on the portrait which had made such a moving appeal to

Dennis. At sight of it she recalled the story of how her father had stood smilingly on the deck of the *Titanic* after he had helped fill the last life-boat, and had gayly waved his cap in farewell when it was discovered there was no room for him.

“The portrait,” she repeated.

“Yes, miss,” he replied, glad of her questions which gave him an opportunity to clarify his own thoughts. “I’m sure you won’t think shame of me, but of late, the eyes of that portrait—they’re like yours, miss—have been following me all around the room all the time I’m attendin’ to my duties. ’Tis like he wants something. ’Twas no longer ago than yesterday, when I stood behind your chair, the eyes of the two of us met above the top of your head, the while you were eatin’ the poor scrap of a luncheon, which same God forgive me for servin’ you, I fancied it was wanting to speak to me he was. I was that sure of it that after you went out I was compelled to go and stand before it like I was goin’ to take orders from it. And the lips said to me as plain as I’m talkin’ to you now: ‘Keep your eyes open, Dennis, keep your eyes open. There’s something wrong goin’ on,’ and he seemed to be beggin’ me to do somethin’, though what it is I’m expected to do is what I can’t make out at all. Just the now, the while you are eatin’ your dinner, he seemed to be sayin’ again: ‘You’re a blind



fool, Dennis. You're a blind fool.' There's somethin' goin' wrong, miss, you'll forgive me for sayin' it, but I'm sure of it."

Eleanor rose from the table, and her face went deadly white. Not that she attached any importance to the speaking portrait, but Dennis had put into words her own half-formed thoughts. He had sensed an imminent danger where her duller perceptions had been only vaguely stirred. She clasped her hands over her breast as if to stifle her fears.

"Dennis," she said, "I believe my father is asking you to be a friend to his daughter, and, oh, I know I am going to need you. I have no one in the world but Colonel Merriman, and he is so far away—dear God, bring him to me soon." Her words ended in a sob which she vainly endeavored to control.

Dennis was deeply moved. He fixed his eyes on the portrait, and Eleanor heard the words:

"You know, Miss Eleanor, that I promised your mother on her dying bed I'd be yours to command any hour of the day or night: and may the grass grow on my doorstep, and the fox make his nest on my hearthstone if I fail you."

The unfeigned earnestness of the solemn pledge warmed the heart of the lonely girl.

"Thank you, Dennis, thank you," she said fervently. "You don't know how you have comforted me—for I'm afraid—I'm afraid."



## CHAPTER VII

### BRIDE OR REFUGEE

**E**LEANOR had scarcely finished her meager breakfast next morning when Charles came breezily in. He always blew lightly into a room, as though he had been wafted there on a passing breeze. He sought and found Eleanor in the drawing-room whither she had gone to relieve Ann of the dusting and herself of the restlessness which had of late been growing upon her.

“Good morning, fair cousin,” he sang out in his gay, ringing voice. “By Jove! but you are ripping in the domestic rôle. I salute Penelope.” He placed his hand on his breast and laughingly swept her a graceful bow.

“You’re an early bird, Charles. We don’t expect callers before we have tidied up the rooms,” she lamely retorted, making an attempt to imitate his vivacious and easy manner.

“By Jove!” he exclaimed with mock indignation. “That’s hospitable, I must say. Why couldn’t you say, ‘You’re never too early to be welcome here’? ‘But man is born to bumps as the sparks fly upwards,’ as the proverb says,” he added lightly.

He walked over to the window and fumbled with its fastenings. "How do you manage to exist here in this shut-in place, Eleanor?" he exclaimed impatiently. He opened the window and inhaled the fresh air that came pouring in. "I can't bear a shut-in place of any kind," he said, "it makes me feel trapped, and brought to bay, as it were."

It was in Eleanor's mind to say, "That is exactly the way I feel all the time you are here," but she said simply: "You forget I have no choice in the matter."

"That's just what I have come to talk to you about," he promptly rejoined. "If you can lay aside that heathen Chinese idol whose sacred person you are defiling with a common, unconsecrated dust-cloth, and come and sit down a few minutes, I'll explain a very unpleasant situation in my very pleasantest manner."

With an ingratiating smile, he placed his hands invitingly on the back of a deeply upholstered chair and waited for her to be seated.

Her heart suddenly missed a beat or two; but since her conversation with Dennis the evening before, she was partially fortified against panic. The conviction that danger threatened her, and the entire ignorance of its character, her distrust of Charles, not to call the feeling by any other name, warned her to be on her guard.

She affected not to notice the proffered chair,

in which one could not sit without sinking helplessly, with relaxed muscles, into its spacious and roomy depths, and chose instead an upright, straight-backed chair near the door.

Charles laughed a trifle unpleasantly.

“Your attitude is a little unpropitious for what I have to tell you, I must say,” he remarked.

His appraising eye took in the grace of the girl's figure in its alert pose, lithe and strong, yet appealingly feminine. He noted the straight lines of the blue linen morning dress she was wearing, above the white organdie collar of which her curving white neck arose, supporting, at the present moment, a rather too rigidly held head. Her skin was clear with a tint of olive. A little more color would make it exquisite. Hair, brown, with only the merest hint of a wave. He liked that. He hated frizzly hair. An altogether desirable mouth above a firm, round chin. He even marked the fine modeling of the hands which lay clasped on her blue linen lap.

He had folded his arms, and stood leaning on the back of the chair she had discarded.

“Why do you avoid me, Eleanor?” he protested gently. “You know I love you, you adorable thing. The more you hold me off, the more I want you.”

Her eyes traveled curiously over him as though he were a remote actor on a stage performing for her benefit, and not expecting a reply. She



suddenly caught herself up. Here was a man proposing to her. With a slight accession of color and a little laugh she said:

“Was that the very unpleasant thing you were going to say to me in a very pleasant way?”

“Not unpleasant for me,” he replied quickly. “I wish I might be equally sure that it is not so to you.”

Her eyes traced the design on the faded Bokhara rug at her feet. Then, with a little frown, she looked squarely at him.

“It is unpleasant for me,” she said, “and I hope you will not persist in talking that way. You said something about an unpleasant situation. I suppose you have reference to Uncle Jasper’s attitude towards me.”

“Yes, it is just that,” he replied, “and that is why I want you to know that I resent his attitude, because I love every hair of your sweet head. I adore you, Eleanor, and my life is one long-drawn-out misery without you. I know I am indirectly responsible for his antipathy to you, but I wish you would believe me when I tell you that I have devoutly wished many times that I had never come back, when I have seen how disastrously it has worked out for you—and for me, too, for that matter. For all I suffered in that pestilential prison camp is as nothing to the agony of carrying on without your love. Can’t you care for me a little, dearest one?”



His voice was very low and tender and pleading as he moved toward her with outstretched hands.

She rose defensively.

"I'm sorry, Charles," she said more gently, "but I can't care for you in that way."

His eyes narrowed. "Is there some one else?" he demanded.

There was something disquieting in his tone and manner—something which prompted her to raise her eyes, and look steadily in his eyes while she uttered the half lie: "Oh, no, it isn't that."

She could not account to herself for her reasons for denying the existence of Wayne Merriman; or why she should not tell all the world that with the army of occupation on the Rhine was the man whose existence she was now denying with her lips, but for whom she was longing with all her heart. She had not appealed to him, or explained her position to him; for he could not leave the service to come to her, and a knowledge of her troubles would only distress him. And, after all, the situation had, up to this point, been merely unpleasant, not unendurable.

"Then marry me, Eleanor," he pleaded. "You must let me take you away from this depressing place. I can't bear to think of your spending your life alone. Come away with me. I'll devote my life to you." He moved a step nearer.

"Don't talk about it any more, please, Charles,

I beg of you," she entreated, standing on the threshold poised for flight.

"I must talk about it. My passion is devouring me," he declared, striking the palms of his hands together and clenching his fingers. "I won't ask you to love me now; but let me take you away from here. We'll go abroad—not to France, that holds too many unpleasant memories for both of us—but to Italy, or, better still, Greece, or, best of all, Egypt. We'll float among the lotus flowers on the Nile, and visit the ancient temples. We'll make this musty hoard of Uncle Jasper's blossom into a thing of joy and beauty. You will come, beloved? You are not happy here, and you have nowhere to go. Here is your refuge." He held out his arms appealingly and a trifle dramatically.

She smiled a little, ignoring the proffered haven.

"And where will Uncle Jasper be all this time we are spending his money in riotous living?" she asked, ironically.

He missed the irony and interpreted her question as slight yielding. He came nearer, his face lighting.

"You will marry me? You will, you queen of women?"

She was maneuvering to keep beyond the reach of his arms, and at the same time maintain a strategic position near the door.

“No, Charles, no,” she said. “I’m sorry. I appreciate the honor—but I don’t love you. I couldn’t marry you. Please don’t have any illusion about my being forced to marry you because I’ve nowhere else to go. I’m sure you would soon tire of a wife who looked upon you merely as an orphan asylum.”

She spoke lightly and smiled pleasantly at him, but she received no answering smile. His arms dropped to his sides. His expression perceptibly altered. After a pause, he said slowly:

“You place me in a most embarrassing position—aside from the wound to my very deepest affections.”

As he did not explain, she was moved to inquire:

“Tell me how I embarrass you.”

“That is the unpleasant thing I hoped I might not have to tell you. As my wife you need never have known it,” he replied.

A few quickened heart-beats warned her of approaching trouble. He walked over to the table and picked up a bronze reproduction of Bologna’s Mercury, and regarded it so long without speaking that she began to wonder if he meant to put the wing-footed messenger to his original use.

Finally he spoke:

“My uncle, as you know”—she noticed that he did not say “our uncle”—“has conceived the most violent dislike for you. I do not believe it



is personal, but only that he begrudges every penny that is diverted from my inheritance. Of course you know, as unfair as it is, he has the right to disinherit you, and he has made no secret of doing so. He has been growing daily more and more hostile to you in spite of all my efforts to prevent it. He has even carried his aversion to such an extent that just before he went away he gave me explicit instructions to—I can't tell you how it grieves me to say this, dearest Eleanor—” He gazed steadily at the ornament in his hand the while he tapped his foot agitatedly on the rug.

“To ask me to find another shelter?” she helped him out.

“That was not just the way he put it. His instructions were to eject you from the house before his return.” He glanced at her through his amber glasses. “In fact, he acknowledged to me the last thing before he went away that his motive for going was to be beyond hearing your lamentations and pleas to remain.”

Her eyes flashed, but he continued without appearing to notice her. “He made me pledge my word that I would carry out his wishes to the letter and take immediate possession of the house myself.” No words can express the regret manifested by his manner.

Now that she knew the truth she felt inexpressibly relieved. Unpleasant, surely, but nothing to



fill the breast of a healthy young woman with the nameless foreboding which had been gradually oppressing her and threatening to paralyze her. She looked at him composedly, and spoke with resurging courage, a barely perceptible touch of scorn in her voice.

“And you love me devotedly, and promised him that?”

“You mistake me, Eleanor,” he hastened to assure her. “If I hadn’t promised to carry out his wishes, he assured me he would do it himself, and to use his own expression ‘see the job thoroughly well done.’ It was for your sake I humored him. Of course you understand I have no intention of carrying out my pledge. Uncle Jasper may return any day and find you here, and I can’t answer for the consequences for you. As for myself, he will probably disinherit me. I need not tell you that I would willingly sacrifice it all to save you one moment of annoyance.”

He was so sincere and sympathetic and genuine that she was ashamed of the injustice she had done him. Her tone was more kindly when she spoke again. She left her position near the door which she had been all this time maintaining, and moved nearer to him.

“Forgive me, Charles, for the unkind thought, but, of course, I shall not remain and jeopardize your inheritance. I shall be obliged to take advantage of your generosity to remain a day or

two. In the meantime I will look around for something to do. There are agencies, I know, where I can find employment.”

She felt almost happy. The crystallization of all her vague apprehensions, her forebodings, and her poignant fears into something tangible was a distinct relief.

“That’s all nonsense,” he exclaimed. “Imagine a niece of the honorable house of Bowen searching for a job like a housemaid. Begging some snob to let her wheel a baby-carriage in a park. I’ll see you doing it! Some day, shy maiden, you’re going to be my wife, and I don’t relish the thought of having my wife pointed out as somebody’s former nurse-maid.”

“Don’t delude yourself with that hope,” she said calmly. “I thank you for your hospitality, and I shall accept it gratefully until I can find something to do. And rather than run any risk of Uncle Jasper returning and disinheriting you, I would be willing to accept a small loan from you—for I have absolutely no money.”

His face fell. “I hoped I would not have to reveal to you the extreme limits of his obsession,” he said with evident embarrassment, “but Uncle Jasper made me take my oath on his moth-eaten old Bible that I wouldn’t give or loan you money. And, somehow, I have scruples against making mental reservations with my hand on the Good Book.”

She flushed with embarrassment, but suddenly recovered herself. There was Dennis.

"I'm sorry I embarrassed you," she said. "I'm afraid, then, I shall have to remain a day or two, but I will think about it and let you know. This is so sudden that I am not prepared to act immediately; but I will lose no time in making my plans." She smiled coolly, and turned to go.

He followed her and spoke impatiently. "Do you really mean that you, a girl sheltered all her life as you have been, actually mean to leave this house and my protection, and throw yourself on the mercy of a pitiless world? You don't know what lies outside sheltered walls for young and beautiful, and—penniless—girls."

"You forget," she said, "that I served with the army in France." Without further words she escaped from the room and ran lightly up the stairs to her own room. Once there, she found herself panting, not wholly with the exercise.

"This is a situation that ought to make Mark Tapley mad with joy," she told herself as she began emptying bureau drawers and assorting things for packing.

When she began to clear out her desk, she sat long before it, and fortified herself with reading letters signed "Wayne." She pressed them to her lips, and to her cheeks—the sheets on which his dear hands had rested.

“Pray God he may come soon,” she breathed.  
“Dear, dear, strong heart, how I need you.”

She took off her wrist watch, and pried open the back cover of the case. There he was. The service cap covered his forehead, but underneath were the keen eyes, the rather high-bridged nose, the firm mouth, about which the lines had prematurely deepened. She knew how those lines could relax, and the sternness of the eyes give way when they looked into hers. She knew the touch of the rough, masculine face on her own smooth cheek; and, more than all, she recalled the feeling of security, of safety, his presence always inspired.

She closed the watch with a sigh at the summons to luncheon. After all, it had been a short and pleasant morning.



## CHAPTER VIII

### A FINANCIAL DIFFICULTY

WHEN Eleanor entered the dining-room, she found Dennis, with a radiant mien, surveying a dainty and bountiful lunch spread on the table, in the center of which was a bowl of glowing red roses. In the half-open swing door of the butler's pantry she caught a glimpse of Ann's unabashed face watching to see the surprise and joy of Eleanor when she beheld the miracle.

Dennis couldn't wait for her to speak first. He was a little disappointed that she did not eagerly seize the bunch of dewy violets which lay beside her plate and bury her nose in their fragrant depths and say: "How perfectly lovely!" as somehow he thought all girls did on such occasions.

"'Tis better times we're seeing ahead of us, Miss Eleanor, praise be to God for that same," he said, as he pulled out her chair.

At first the thought of eating the dainty but bountiful food spread before her for which she was indebted to Charles was repugnant to her, and she almost decided to leave it untouched; but

she could not explain her reason to Dennis, so with a philosophical, "Take the good the gods provide thee," she ate with a relish the first really satisfying meal she had ever had in her uncle's house.

When she had finished, she rose from the table and stood for a moment before her father's portrait. Turning abruptly away, she spoke to Dennis, who was watching her.

"Dennis," she said, "I must leave this house at once—to-day, and I am going to ask you to lend me some money for a short time."

Dennis's round, rubicund face expressed so many emotions all at once it was hard to tell which predominated.

"Leave the house, is it!" he exclaimed. "Just when everything is coming your way. 'Twas only this morning Mr. Charles gave me orders to provide everything for your comfort and convenience. 'Spare no expense,' says he. 'Do you understand?' 'I do,' I says that way back to him. And now you're talkin' of leavin'."

Eleanor now took her turn at astonishment. "He told you that? When did he tell you that?"

"Just after he was talkin' with you in the drawin'-room it was."

She turned this surprising bit of information over in her mind a moment; then firmly determined to carry out her original intention and leave the house before the day was over.

“Nevertheless, I am leaving this afternoon,” she said. “I’m afraid I shall have to ask you to loan me some money for a little time,” she faltered. “Fifty dollars—or twenty-five—or—or less,” she concluded, the color rising in her cheeks at something which was expressing itself in Dennis’s dismayed countenance.

He put his hands in his trousers pockets and, seizing the lining, turned them inside out. A few pieces of silver and some coppers tumbled out on the cloth.

“ ’Tis God’s truth, Miss Eleanor,” he cried with dismay, “ ’tis all the money I’ll be after havin’ till come pay-day which same is a week off. Ann and I are buying a little house for ourselves in the suburbs, and we took every dollar we have in the bank to make a payment on it.”

He looked ruefully at the coins, and apologetically at Eleanor.

“ ’Tis hopin’ I am that you’ll not be thinkin’ that it was because of what Mr. Charles said to me I’d be withholdin’ the money from you,” he continued anxiously, stirred by the expression on her face.

“What do you mean by that?” she questioned quickly, striving to fortify herself for some new disaster.

“ ’Tis his exact words I’ll be tellin’ you,” he burst forth, “and with your permission I’ll call Ann to see that I get them straight.”

She nodded. He had not far to go to find Ann, for she was still hovering about the crack of the door of the butler's pantry. She came in in her positive way, not forgetting, however, the correct demeanor of a servant, which hint she managed to convey subtly to Dennis.

"Here's Ann, miss," he announced formally.

"You have something to tell me, which you wish Ann to hear, I understand," Eleanor said, looking from one to the other. "Go on."

"Mr. Charles said to me, and Ann here heard him, he says: 'Dennis, my uncle has not made Miss Eleanor very happy in this house, and she has taken a foolish notion in her head to go out and make a livin' for herself. Now, we can't have this happen while Uncle Jasper is away. 'Twould hurt his pride to have a niece of his goin' out as a housemaid or a stenographer or earnin' her livin' in any way, shape, or manner, for he's really very fond of her in his queer way,' says he. 'Now, he would disinherit us all—for you know he's leavin' you and Ann enough in his will to make you rich all your days—if we permitted it,' he says. 'Now,' he says, 'she's just after askin' me for money to carry out her foolish intention, and it broke me all up to refuse her, for she's a sweet, gentle lady and an honor to our name,' says he. 'Moreover,' says he, 'I mean to marry her and I want her to have everything that money can buy, but *no money. No money,*'



says he, and his eyes blazin' through his glasses. 'Do you understand what the consequences will be to yourself and Ann if you disobey my orders?'

" 'I do,' says I, dazed like. .

" 'Then hold up your right hand and swear it by the bones of the saints, of the Virgin Mary, or the pope's toe if you like—but swear it.'

"I held up my right hand, all bewildered like, and says 'I do,' and Ann, with her face red and her eyes lookin' fierce as if she was holdin' something back, said 'I do.' And that is all, miss."

Eleanor experienced a momentary sinking of the heart. She made use of her ebbing fortitude to say:

"Dennis, do you believe my uncle is fond of me?"

"Beggin' your pardon, I do not, miss."

"Do you believe it, Ann?"

"Hut! 'Tis not me that believes it afther the way he's treated you, and you his own flesh and blood," sniffed Ann, forgetting her decorum in her rush of indignation.

"Then you believe Mr. Charles was not telling the truth?" Again to Dennis.

"Indeed, in my opinion, he hit the mark far wide of the truth," he said gravely.

"And you, Ann? Do you think Mr. Charles was deliberately lying?"

"Well," admitted Ann, "of course 'twas lyin'

in a way he was. But if you're goin' to marry a man you mustn't harbor all his triffin' mis-statements— You can think what you like; but you must pretend to him 'tis the livin' truth you think it. 'Tis the only way to preserve peace in the family, and that every married woman knows." She complacently regarded Eleanor, who had weakly dropped into a chair at the beginning of Dennis's recital.

"The little divil!" indignantly rose to Dennis's lips, but for reasons of state had to stop there.

Eleanor sprang to her feet. "Marry him! Marry that man! How can you conceive of it? I'll never marry him, and I'll never spend another night under his roof, if I have to lie in the street. And you, Dennis; you who knew my father"—she glanced at the portrait before which Dennis had pronounced such solemn vows the evening before—"and promised my mother—" She could not go on for fear of losing her self-control and she must not do it. She realized that she must keep herself in hand.

"And me, miss?" prompted Dennis gently.

"Oh, I don't blame you, Dennis," she said, trying to keep the bitterness out of her voice. "An inheritance weighs heavily in the balance against a friendless girl."

"And what's this you're saying about the inheritance, Miss Eleanor?" interposed Ann, plac-

ing her hands on her hips, a gesture habitual with her when an aggressive campaign was contemplated.

"Only that because of the inheritance you both swore you wouldn't help me get away from this house—oh, I don't blame you—I don't blame you," she said.

"Listen to the girl, then," exclaimed Ann. "And when did we ever swear to the likes of that, I'd like to know?"

"You swore you wouldn't give me any money, and that is the equivalent," retorted Eleanor.

Ann laughed.

"Alanna, then, 'tis the servants have better ears than the mistress. When I saw Dennis here raise his hand at Mr. Charles's biddin' I was ready to call out, 'May the han' be paralyzed that raises itself against Miss Eleanor.' But when I heard Mr. Charles say, 'Do swear you *realize the consequences* to yourself and Ann,' why sure what was the harm of swearin' to that? How could we help realizin' the consequences when he had just informed us?"

"Do you mean, you are really willing to forfeit your inheritance for me?" asked Eleanor.

"Sure we are," replied Ann equably. "What's the good of money that brings only worry to your mind? And there'd be sure to be a curse on it anyway," she added.

"And then again," said Dennis simply, "'tis



no choice we have in the matter, for who is there to look after you, barrin' Ann and me?"

And then the flood of tears came. Eleanor dropped her head on her folded arms on the table and sobbed aloud. Ann put her arms around the lonely girl and made no attempt to restrain her own tears. Dennis, ashamed to indulge in such weakness, snatched a tray from the serving table, and retreated to the butler's pantry, where no one can say how he expressed his emotion.

After a time the torrent of tears subsided and Eleanor went to her room and bathed her swollen eyes. Then she realized she had not asked Dennis to bring her trunk to her room. But to what purpose was it to pack her trunk when there was no place to send it? She resolved that she would not lose control of herself again; but soon found it impossible to carry out her resolution if she remained alone. She decided to go to the kitchen and stay with Ann. She jumped nervously at a long shadow that fell across the corridor outside her door. She was trembling with vague terror when she passed old Jasper's menacing door, and she ran panic-stricken down the stairs, not stopping until she fairly bounced in upon the startled Ann.

"For the love of God, what's on you, child?" exclaimed Ann.

Eleanor laughed nervously.

"Just nothing. Nothing at all, Ann. I'm a



coward and I'm going to stay with you. I can't stand it another minute by myself. I feel as if there were a huge black cloud settling down on me and soon it'll be so dark I can't find my way out of it. Please let me stay with you. I'll help you." She looked around the bright and sunny kitchen—the only bright spot in the whole great house.

"Of course you can stay with me, and welcome, child. Take the cloth out of my hand and wipe the silver," said Ann, realizing the healing effect of occupation, "and when we have the dishes done we'll go up to the room above that Dennis and I do be callin' our sittin' room. I believe you've never seen this part of the house."

Eleanor acknowledged that she never had seen it, but would love to go up and spend the afternoon there. When the work was finished she followed Ann up a back staircase that led to the servants' rooms. At the end of the narrow corridor nearest the staircase was a small unused, but comfortably furnished servants' bedroom. Turning to the left, the corridor led to two other communicating rooms which were used by Dennis and Ann, the one as a bedroom and the larger one for a commodious sitting room. Beyond was another small furnished servants' bedroom, and across the hall were two long narrow closets. At the extreme end of the hall a door led into the front part of the house. This door was locked

and bolted from the front and had not been used for many years, Ann believed. "Indeed, I misdoubt me if it could be opened now, it must be that rusty, and moresomeover I don't believe the key could be found, for I have never seen the like since I came to the house. Just beyond this door, on the other side of the partition, is the master's bedroom. Many's the time I've said to Dennis 'tis a wonder he wouldn't open it and not keep Dennis runnin' down one flight and up another and then back again every time he wants something."

Eleanor tried the door. It was indeed locked, but it did not impress her as being as rusted as Ann had declared. She observed that there was no bolt on the servants' side, an omission which did not seem to disturb the placid couple whose domain lay at the mercy of the occupants of the rooms beyond. The significance that Eleanor attached to it, she attributed to her unaccountable nervous state; but she did, nevertheless, allow it to occupy her mind from time to time during the rest of the day.

## CHAPTER IX

### THE TRAGEDY

**T**HE relief that Eleanor gained by her visit to the servants' quarters was only temporary, for in the background of her mind lay the urge to pack her trunk and leave the house. Consequently when Dennis was free, they all repaired to Eleanor's room, whither he brought the trunk and Ann packed it, Eleanor assisting.

Dennis was kneeling on the lid to make the lock close, when a Louis Quatorze clock on the mantel struck five. At the same moment the doorbell pealed violently. They heard the front door open, followed by the sound of Mr. Charles' voice in excited tones calling: "Dennis, Dennis!"

"Let me go, Dennis," said Eleanor, her color receding, but instinctively rising to meet an emergency. "He must not know you are with me. I'll take him to the drawing-room and you and Ann slip away."

She ran down to meet him.

"Why, Charles," she exclaimed, "what has happened?" She was startled by his pallor and his extreme agitation.

He followed her to the rear of the drawing-



room, whither she had adroitly led him. He was very pale. In his shaking hands he was holding an evening edition of a newspaper. But he was not too agitated to detect the furtive steps of the fleeing servants on the staircase.

He stepped quickly to the door and met the offenders face to face, but did not appear to perceive anything clandestine in their movements.

“Dennis and Ann,” he said excitedly, “come here. I want you to listen to this.” He struck the newspaper with the back of his hand, but appeared too agitated to read the paragraph.

“Yes, sir,” said Ann, always the first to find her composure and the last to lose it.

“My God!” he said, raising the paper and staring at it. He passed his hand across his forehead as if wiping away the sweat of agony. “To think this could happen to poor Uncle Jasper. I shall never forgive myself for letting him go alone. But he never told me he was going to a place like that!” He seemed to have forgotten his audience in the sharpness of his own grief.

They, in the meantime, were waiting expectantly, apprehensively, for the revelation of the news which had stirred him so profoundly. Eleanor leaned for support on the back of a heavily upholstered chair; Dennis stood at respectful attention; and Ann supported herself on two sturdy feet and fixed her intelligent blue eyes keenly on the central figure of the little drama.



When the suspense became a bit too prolonged to satisfy her sense of the dramatic proprieties she burst forth:

“For the love of God, what’s on you, Mr. Charles, that you don’t split your lips with what you have to say? Is it that something has happened to Mr. Bowen? An’ if so, why in the name of goodness don’t you be after tellin’ Miss Eleanor and she standin’ there waitin’ to know what-somever it is?”

Thus admonished, he pulled himself together with a start and murmured:

“True, Ann, true. To tell the truth, this tragedy has nearly unmanned me. I heard the news-boys calling out the edition in the street and I just casually bought a copy. The first thing my eye fell upon was this.” He choked with emotion and Eleanor gently took the paper from his hand, whereupon he fell into a chair and, resting his elbows on the arms, covered his face with his hands.

Eleanor read:

“ ‘Tragic Death of a Mysterious Stranger.

“ ‘The town of Smithville was shocked this afternoon to learn of the tragic death of a mysterious stranger who came to the junction on the east-bound express yesterday afternoon and engaged a taxicab to take him to Globe Hollow. His eccentric dress, his advanced age, and his insistence on spending the night in so unlikely a place,

together with the fact that he was supplied with an abundance of money, convinced the driver of the cab that he had escaped from some asylum for the insane. Against his better judgment the driver left him at Globe Hollow after promising to return to-day with supplies for which the singular old gentleman liberally advanced payment.

“ ‘When the driver reached Globe Hollow to-day with the promised supplies, he found the cabin burned to the ground and the charred remains of his passenger in the ashes.’ ”

A deep groan from Charles and a horrified exclamation from Eleanor interrupted the reading. Dennis struck his palms together and held them with tightly interlocked fingers.

“ ‘For the love of God!’ ” said Ann.

In a hushed voice Eleanor continued:

“ ‘The insane asylums, far and near, are being notified in the hopes that the identity of the unfortunate stranger may be established. He wore a peculiarly cut cape and a sort of Quaker or Puritan hat much too large for his head. He displayed to the driver a huge roll of bills apparently of large denominations which he claimed contained ten thousand dollars. His mania seemed to be “a bothersome niece.” ’ ”

“ ‘Humph!’ ” snorted Ann.

Eleanor continued as if fascinated:

“ ‘It is believed that he escaped from his attendants some time yesterday, that he must have

been previously acquainted with Globe Hollow, and selected that place as the least likely spot to be searched for him; that he sought shelter in the cabin during the night, built a fire for warmth and fell asleep. The dry wood of the cabin, in all probability, caught fire, and before the infirm old man could make his escape he was caught in the flames and perished.' "

The paper dropped from Eleanor's quivering fingers to the floor. She forgot her uncle's harshness in her vivid grief for the manner of his end. She visualized his feeble attempts to combat the flames that overtook him, and she shuddered in horror.

Ann's voice broke in: "For the love of God, whatever did he go to a place like that for with no one to look after him and him that feeble that he's not left his room for the past six weeks and more? What druv him to it, I'd like to know? And if he had no other troubles than a bothersome niece, then, to drive him from home, then what happened to him was good enough for him, I'll be sayin' that shouldn't."

"Ann!" reproved Dennis, sharply. "Sure 'tis no call you have to be judgin' others. Mr. Bowen had his own reasons for goin', and if they was unworthy ones then 'twas the judgment of God overtook him, and 'tis yourself might leave it at that."

"Leave it at that, says you, and the newspapers



soon'll be flauntin' Miss Eleanor's name to the four winds of heaven and 'tis all you care," hotly retorted Ann.

Dennis, shocked at Ann's boldness in the presence of Mr. Charles, opened his mouth to reprove her again, when Mr. Charles, in a subdued and gentle tone, interposed.

"Let her alone, Dennis. It shows what a loyal soul she is to think of Miss Eleanor first—and not give a thought to her inheritance. I thank you, Ann, I shall not forget it. You may go, now," he said, rising with regained composure.

"And now, Eleanor," he said in the same gentle tones after they had acted upon his dismissal, "our poor uncle with all his faults has been gathered to his fathers, which changes your status here. Promise me that you will not think of leaving until after the will is read. The honor of the family requires it, and surely you cannot hold a grudge against the dead."

"No, I hold no ill will towards Uncle Jasper, but what is to be gained by my staying?" she asked in a toneless voice.

"I can't stay to explain, now, for I must get up to Smithville as quickly as I can and identify the victim of this terrible tragedy. I'm satisfied it can be no other than Uncle Jasper. I shall go to-night." He drew out a thin gold watch and glanced at the dial. "I shall come back some time to-morrow and bring back the remains. You



would be of great service to me, Eleanor, to be here with the house opened to receive any friends he may have.”

“Of course, I’ll stay,” she said, simply, thinking of the irony of the miser’s return.

“Thank you,” he said warmly. “I knew I could depend on you, and I promise you there are happier days ahead for you.”

He held out his hand with a subdued smile, and it took all her resolution to stretch out hers to meet it. When her fingers touched his palm they were cold and limp. He bit his lips, dropped her hand, and without another word strode away.

When the door closed behind him all her apprehensions of danger returned. She fled to the kitchen again.

Dennis was reproving Ann for her indiscreet championship of Miss Eleanor, and Ann acknowledged for the first time in his memory that she was in the wrong. “ ’Tis a blunderin’ fool I am and her not wantin’ him to know we’re befriendin’ her,” she lamented.

Eleanor poured oil on the troubled waters, and then firmly announced that she would not spend another night in her own room. She was going to occupy one of the little rooms near them. They heartily approved of this decision, and Ann hastily collected fresh linen and together they put the little room in order.

Dennis served Eleanor’s dinner as usual in the

dining-room; the eyes of the portrait beamed approval of this move, and some of the oppression of the day was lifted. When the duties were all finished and the house fastened up for the night, they all went up to Ann's sitting room. It was a cheerful room with fresh muslin curtains at the windows, the old frames of which were concealed by hangings of bright cretonne. There was a center table on which was a drop light with a shade made by Ann's skillful hands from the same kind of material as that at the windows. Soft cushions covered with the same cheerful material were heaped on an ancient but extremely comfortable sofa which had descended by gradual stages from its place of honor in the drawing-room to its present position. A Franklin stove with shining brass fenders contained a glowing fire, for the evenings were growing chilly.

Drawn up where the light fell favorably upon it was a square felt-covered card table flanked on opposite sides by a comfortable chair. A well-worn pack of cards between them gave mute evidence that Dennis and Ann were wont to engage in a game of Forty-five before going to bed.

Eleanor's eyes filled with tears at the homely domesticity of the room, speaking of the congenial companionship and mutual trust and love of its occupants, the only room in the great house thus hallowed.

She insisted that they should play their usual game, and they, loyal souls, knew intuitively that she would be more at her ease if left to her own thoughts. So while they played their usual game she lay among the comfortable cushions of the sofa and winked back her tears while she longed for the home-coming of Wayne Merriman. Would the army of occupation ever be withdrawn? Her thoughts went back to France and reconstructed the story of her love. How she had met Colonel Merriman in an amusement hut where she had danced and danced and danced with the boys hungry for the companionship of a girl from home until she was ready to drop and the gray-eyed, tired-looking young colonel had come to her rescue and sat out a dance with her. They had talked of home and of each other, and then they met the next day and yet again in a simple way, and when they parted he held her hand a long time and said with a look in his eyes which expressed far more than his words:

“I have been refreshed in a wonderful way this time back in the billets, may I thank you?”

He still held her hand and looked as though he would like to take the tired girl to his breast.

And she looked back at him and longed for the clear-eyed, strong-limbed, and fine-featured young officer to carry out his desires. He did not do it then, but she smiled to herself and felt



the warm color coming back to her pale face at the recollection of the time when he did so and the many times thereafter. And then the Armistice came and he was ordered to the Rhine. She stayed in Paris and they were to have been married there on his next leave. Then the cable came calling her home, the death of her mother followed and she was thrown temporarily on the cold hospitality of Uncle Jasper.

The thought of Uncle Jasper brought her suddenly out of her reverie and she became aware that the game was over, and by certain signs of Dennis guessed that it was their bedtime.

She sprang to her feet.

“I’ve had such a beautiful evening,” she said. “Why didn’t I think of this before instead of staying all by myself those long, dreary, desolate evenings? Ann, you dear, I’m never going to leave you.” She threw her arms around the delighted Ann and kissed her heartily.

“And as for you, Dennis,” with a quick movement she placed her soft pink palms against his shaven cheeks, and as light as a thistledown fell a swift kiss on his forehead, and then she whisked away, laughing at Dennis’s pleased embarrassment.

When she stretched her limbs between the fresh linen sheets of her narrow and long-unused bed, she experienced a delicious sense of security to



which she had long been a stranger and she dropped almost immediately into sweet, refreshing slumber.

It seemed to her that she had scarcely closed her eyes when she found herself startingly wide awake. In truth she had been sleeping since nine o'clock, and it was now on the stroke of midnight. Without waiting an instant to analyze the cause of her alarm she sprang from her bed, opened her door noiselessly and slipped swiftly into the hall. Cautiously she opened the door of the sitting room, and, when once safely inside, she as cautiously turned the key. Her heart was beating wildly, but as yet she had not consciously heard a sound. She wouldn't disturb the sleepers in the next room, but it comforted her to be near them.

Then on the last stroke of twelve there arose a strange mysterious whisper. It floated in through the open transom and played about the ceiling. It awakened Ann and Dennis, and then she knew that it was that sound that had probably awakened her. She stepped back to the sitting room, and clasping her white silk dressing gown around her shivering body waited with blanched cheeks.

Presently it came again, indistinct and untraceable at first, and then it gradually resolved itself into something familiar. It began at the foot of the staircase, rose to the narrow hall and trav-

ersed its length beating itself as it were against the door beyond which was the corridor leading to old Jasper's bedroom. It came over the transom, the husky, malicious, mocking, sinister laughter of Uncle Jasper.

Ann, with one wild leap, sprang back into bed and thrust her head under an avalanche of bed-clothes. Dennis remained paralyzed where he stood; and Eleanor, her lithe form swaying gently from side to side, sank to the floor in a dead faint.

## CHAPTER X

### OUTWITTING THE GHOST

**T**HE long night of terror was over at last. Daybreak came, and with the first premonitory ray of the approaching sun Ann ceased praying, assured then that the ghost was laid for the time being at any rate.

For all they knew to the contrary, old Jasper had returned to his charnel house many hours before cock crow; for after that one prolonged, malevolent, menacing outbreak, the phantom laughter did not return.

Eleanor had not returned to her little bedroom again, but spent the remainder of the night wide awake on the old sofa. They had kept the light burning and the bedroom door open between them, but nothing but their apprehensions kept them from sleeping.

With daylight, however, Eleanor resolved to take herself well in hand, and not give way to superstitious fears again. She went down to the kitchen with Ann and insisted on breakfasting with her and Dennis in the servants' dining-room. At the breakfast table they discussed the subject which occupied their minds to the exclusion of everything else. And as usually happens in post-

humorous testimony offered by several witnesses to the same event, they differed in their versions. Eleanor thought the sound began at the foot of the staircase and traveled towards the corridor door. Ann thought it traveled in the opposite direction; and Dennis spoke of it as coming from everywhere at once, and ending in a long, despairing wail like a lost soul in torment.

“ ’Tis not that I like to be always contradictin’,” said Ann, sparingly buttering a hot waffle, “but ’twas no lost soul in torment at all; but a triumphant devil it was with full power to destroy us if we don’t take the necessary precautions to circumvent it.” Ann frequently had to depend on words of many syllables to floor Dennis in an argument.

“And how would you be after knowin’ what kind of a devil it was, you with your head buried under the bed clothes?” retorted Dennis, surreptitiously putting another lump in his coffee.

“Miss Eleanor knows and she’ll tell you I’m speakin’ nothing but God’s truth,” persisted Ann.

“Beggin’ her pardon, but how could she be after knowin’ and she lyin’ there on the floor like a corpse herself?”

Dennis was getting the better of the argument when Eleanor interposed.

“Now, listen to me, both of you,” she said firmly. “I admit I was frightened out of my senses last night and I’m heartily ashamed of it



this morning. What would my father say if he saw his daughter fainting away and going to pieces over a silly noise that somebody, for some reason, is trying to scare us with? First of all, we must keep saying over and over to ourselves, 'There are no ghosts.' "

Dennis's expression caused her to stop and scan his features.

"Well? What are you thinking of?" she demanded.

" 'Tis not becomin' in me to differ with you, miss," he replied apologetically, "but what's the good of sayin' over and over there are no ghosts when 'tis well we know there *are* ghosts?"

"How do you know there are ghosts? You never saw one, did you?" she pressed, determined to allay the superstitious fears in his mind as a preliminary to some decisive action she was convinced they must take.

"Praise be to God, I never did. But my grandfather saw the ghost of old Finnegan—he that turned his daughter out to perish on the wild moor—wan night when he was passin' Ballyhack graveyard with Father O'Flaherty on his way to give the last rites to Felix McHagg, him that had his skull cracked at Donnybrook fair by the shillalah of Terrence Dooly him that—"

"For the love of God, Dennis," interrupted Ann, "are you givin' us a discoorse on the manners of them that have the good fortune to be

born outside of Ulster? Mind the coffee you're spatterin' on the tablecloth,—an' you wavin' your spoon in the air like you had no manners yerself."

Eleanor laughed. It was plain that they, with true Irish optimism, were applying the philosophy "sufficient unto the day—or night—is the ghost thereof," and that however they might react to another night visitation, they could be depended on through the daylight hours.

"Tell me this, Dennis," she said. "Can ghosts pass through locked and bolted doors?"

"Sure they can, miss," declared Dennis emphatically. "There was the one in Galloway." From the tail of his eye he caught sight of Ann preparing to put her arms akimbo—a gesture he particularly disliked in her, and he lamely concluded.

"Why, yes, of course they can. What'd be the good of their bein' ghosts if they couldn't?"

"Well, then, if we have to spend another night here, and it looks very much as if we should, you think we might as well leave all the doors wide open, and not lock or bolt them?"

Dennis shook his head doubtfully. "Well, I wouldn't exactly say that. It might look as if we were defyin' them to do that. 'Tis best to treat them with all due respect; and locks and bolts would be the surest way to convince them that they've nothin' to fear from us."

Eleanor suppressed her amusement and said gravely:

“I quite agree with you; so let us get busy and bolt every door leading into this part of the house. Put one on the kitchen side of every door leading into it. Another on the door at the foot of the stairs. Lock and bolt this dining-room. Put one inside your sitting room. I shall sleep there on the sofa. Put one inside your bedroom—but don’t bolt me out. Keep it for an emergency. And, Dennis, be sure to put one on the corridor door near Uncle Jasper’s bedroom.”

“There’s one already on the corridor door,” interposed Ann, “and that rusty that no ghost new to the job could ever get next or nigh us that way.”

“It’s on the wrong side,” she said significantly. “I particularly want a strong bolt on this side.”

“I have no bolts in the house, Miss Eleanor,” said Dennis suddenly.

“There are plenty on other doors where they are not needed. Remove them from any of the doors in the front, and we will barricade our quarters to the satisfaction of the most exacting ghost. Let’s get busy at once. Mr. Charles will be here, and who knows what may happen before the day is over.”

Eleanor had risen from the table with returning color and with a renewed energy she was de-



terminated to put to use. She accompanied Dennis while he removed bolts from the doors in the front part of the house, and stood by and held screws and bolts while he refitted them in the servants' quarters.

By lunch time she was hungry and cheerful and braced for coming events.

About six o'clock Charles returned. He was very subdued in manner and he wore a broad band of black on his left arm. He had had a very trying day, he explained to Eleanor, for there was no doubt that the victim of the tragedy was Uncle Jasper. When he had seen the place called Globe Hollow, which was really no hollow at all—merely a slight depression on a bleak and lonely mountainside with a forest of pines behind it—he was indignant that anybody should leave the helpless old man there. And when he looked upon the ruined cabin and thought of Uncle Jasper perishing so frightfully there, it quite unmanned him.

At this point of his tale he was unable to continue for a moment. With an effort he controlled his emotion, and presently went on in a changed tone. He had, he said, had his suspicions aroused. It was incredible to him that Uncle Jasper had ever asked the driver, who seemed to be a very shifty fellow, to take him to that unlikely spot. He had made sharp inquiries at the junction, and



the fellow admitted taking one hundred dollars for his services, claiming that his passenger offered him the money without solicitation.

“Now, you and I know, Eleanor,” he said, “that Uncle Jasper was not the man to part with money like that. The other drivers at the junction saw Uncle Jasper display a roll of bills to the driver before they started. Now, my opinion is that the sight of that roll aroused the cupidity of the driver. I happen to know that Uncle Jasper took ten thousand dollars with him, and that is the sum the driver says his passenger claimed to have. I think he drove him to that remote spot and murdered him for the money, and then set fire to the cabin to conceal his crime. It is too dreadful to contemplate.” He sank back in his chair utterly overcome and placed his hand over his eyes.

Eleanor had passed through so many exhausting emotions that this revelation failed to move her as it did him. She waited silently for him to recover himself.

“I have done all I could to avenge this atrocious murder,” he continued presently. “I have informed the police of my suspicions and have instigated the arrest of the guilty cab-driver. All that money can do to bring him to justice I shall cheerfully do. That much I owe to the man who, with all his faults, was deeply attached to me.”

“I have wondered why you let him go alone,” said Eleanor, singularly unmoved by his emotion.

“He told me he was going to Sulphur Springs, and I knew he would be met there and shown every consideration. He took that large sum of money with him to insure every attention. You know his belief in the magic power of money,” explained Charles.

“I don’t see why he changed his mind on the way, as he must have done, for Sulphur Springs is this side of Smithville Junction, isn’t it?” she questioned, skeptically. “I thought Dennis bought his ticket, by your orders, for Smithville Junction.”

He rose to his feet.

“He probably became confused,—who can tell?” he replied with an air of not wishing to continue the conversation.

“And you, Eleanor,” he said suddenly, turning to look at her sharply. “Have you been all right? Nothing has happened to disturb you?”

She looked him squarely in the eye. “Nothing not connected with Uncle Jasper,” she replied smoothly. “That is quite enough to disturb me.”

“Yes, yes, that’s true enough. And the servants? They are attending to their duties as usual? They are not fidgety or nervous over anything?”

Eleanor always wondered what lay behind the

amber glasses; what expression of the eyes might now possibly accompany these questions.

“Why, no, not unduly,” she replied evenly.

After a moment’s hesitation he changed the subject abruptly.

“The coroner’s inquest was held up there,” he stated, “and I brought the body back with me, I had a simple service held at the undertaker’s rooms, and ordered the interment to take place at once. I did this to spare you all unpleasant details. I hope that nothing distasteful to you will ever occur again. I shall make it the object of my life in future to atone for Uncle Jasper’s ill-treatment of you.”

He paused to give her time to express her gratitude for his generous behavior, but it came a little slowly, and was expressed in a murmured word, “Thanks.”

“At nine o’clock the will will be read,” he went on, “and I am in hopes that Uncle Jasper has been decent enough to remember you generously. You will be free then to go where you please—although it will leave me desolate,” he added in a melancholy tone.

“You do not, of course, expect me to be present at the reading of the will,” she said, ignoring the last part of his speech.

“Most certainly I do,” he emphatically assured her. “For all we know you may be the heir instead of me. And let me say now, Eleanor, I

devoutly hope it may be so. It means nothing to me without you.”

He did not seem to expect a reply, but took up his hat, which in his excitement he had worn into the drawing-room, and dejectedly passed out of the house.



## CHAPTER XI

### THE WILL IS READ

**A**T nine o'clock, the hour appointed for the reading of Jasper Bowen's will, the old library was illuminated to its utmost limited capacity. A reading lamp on the long table in the center of the room furnished a light for the lawyer. In the tarnished chandelier that hung suspended from the ceiling but one gas light appeared. Two of the globes had been broken years before and had never been replaced. Electric lights had never been installed in the miser's house. The sickly yellow flame fluttered uneasily and cast weird, shifting shadows over the little group assembled there.

The lawyer, the same who so recently had drawn up the will in this same room and had met with such discourteous treatment, sat perfunctorily by the table and waited. Charles, standing by the window, looked through his amber glasses across the room at Eleanor, whose face, above the black dress she had adopted for the occasion, appeared white and drawn.

When Dennis and Ann came in, Charles mo-

tioned them to seats on the chairs nearest the door, and signaled the lawyer to proceed with the business for which they had gathered.

Eleanor listened abstractedly to the level, measured voice as it pronounced the usual preliminaries and formula of a will, and was scarcely interested when she learned that the whole estate went to Charles; but presently she heard her own name, and she flushed hotly at the superlative malice which pursued her even from the grave. She learned that she was not only cut off from any inheritance, but the testator provided that Charles should forfeit the whole estate if he provided for her "in any way, shape, or manner." It went on to provide that Charles should take possession of the house within one hour of the reading of the will, and that Eleanor's presence in the house with Charles's consent after the expiration of that time should be construed as contrary to the wishes of the testator and the inheritance forfeited: the property in that case to revert to the state.

"I hope the devil is roasting him on a gridiron this minute," muttered the outraged Ann under her breath; while Dennis gripped the arms of his chair fiercely with both hands to keep himself from flying at the lawyer and wresting the offensive document from his hands and rending it to bits.

"Providing," the monotonous voice went on,

callous to the emotions it was exciting, "that nothing in this will shall be construed as obstructing my nephew, Charles Bowen, in the choice of a wife. If that choice should fall upon my niece, Eleanor, he shall be free to endow her with any part or all of the estate, as he considers wise and desirable."

Eleanor's body seemed to congeal, and she found herself shaking as with a chill. She had to shut her teeth hard to keep them from chattering. The sinister presence of the malevolent old man seemed to be all about her, crushing her young life out. She turned her eyes instinctively to her two humble friends, and the sight of their sturdy figures sitting stiffly in their chairs and casting glances at her, half of indignation and half of compassion, restored her to an outward composure.

The lawyer had begun a new paragraph, and this related to the two servants. They heard that they were to remain in the service of Charles five more years, at the end of which time they were to receive a generous annuity. If, however, they left before that time without Charles's permission the inheritance would be automatically forfeited.

Presently the lawyer's voice ceased. He rose and refolded the document. If he sensed the emotions he had aroused he made no sign. He was about to take his leave when Eleanor stopped



him. She had risen to her feet, her face set and defiant.

“Mr. Thornton,” she said, “I believe you *are* Mr. Thornton?” she questioned.

The lawyer bowed in acknowledgment.

“When did my uncle make that will?” she demanded.

His sphinx-like gaze fell upon her with more interest than was apparent in their inscrutable depths. This attractive young woman with defiant eyes and compelling voice was the disinherited niece, then. Quite a different personality from the one he had imagined when he drew up the will for the vindictive old sinner. He glanced from her to Charles, who started forward as if to interpose.

“Yesterday,” he replied, his eyes seeking hers again.

“Were you here in the house yesterday?” she asked in some surprise.

“Yes, I was here in the morning,” he replied laconically, but courteously. He studied her intently, trying to fathom a motive for the malignant cruelty evidenced toward her in the will.

A skeptical expression flitted over her face. In the confusion of events following closely on the making of the will the previous day Dennis had forgotten to tell her of that episode.

“In my uncle’s room,” she demanded.

“No, I drew up the will in this room. Mr.



Bowen received me here.” Surely this was a fine specimen of womanhood. What had caused her uncle’s aversion, he wondered.

“But my uncle was quite unable to leave his room yesterday—has been confined to his bed for some time. We have been daily expecting that the frail thread holding him to life would snap any moment.” Her eyes turned to Dennis, who nodded emphatically.

“You forget, Eleanor,” interposed Charles gently, “that he went away alone on this unfortunate journey. I have suspected for some time,” he added, speaking to the lawyer now, “that Uncle Jasper was not so feeble as he would have us think. I can’t account for his reason for it, unless to test my devotion to him. I have never known him well. In fact I had never seen him since I was grown up, but his treatment of me since my return has certainly won my undying affection.” His lips trembled a little with the emotion of this last thought.

Eleanor kept her eyes on the lawyer’s face during this interruption, and she fancied she read symptoms of disapprobation of the speaker.

“And you drew up that will?” she asked scornfully, ignoring Charles’s interruption.

“Unfortunately, yes,” he admitted, and if she read the signs right he regretted it.

She was puzzled, but not satisfied. She contracted her brows for a moment, and then with

an abrupt "Thank you" she moved swiftly toward the door.

Charles as swiftly followed her.

"Eleanor," he said, "what are you going to do?"

"I'm going to put on my hat," she answered coldly, continuing on her way.

He caught her arm and detained her. "You will do nothing of the kind," he said, sharply. "I ask you now, before witnesses, to be my wife. You are the woman I choose, and as such you are entitled to remain here. I *command* you," he said in ringing tones, as he felt her moving away from him.

She paused and looked at him with contemptuous eyes. "You talk like a top-sergeant," she said with withering scorn.

For the life of her she could no longer conceal the suspicion, the distrust of him she had so long held in leash. Contempt blazed in her eyes and betrayed itself in the poise of her dark head on the slender neck.

He recoiled as from a blow, and withdrew his delaying hand. An expression not good to see crossed his face for the duration of a lightning flash. Then he recovered himself and bowed.

"You wrong me, Eleanor," he said sadly.

Without deigning to glance at him again, she swept out of the room. Dennis and Ann prepared to follow her.

“Dennis!” His voice had the sharpness of a two-edged sword. “Remain where you are.” Dennis and Ann became instantly rooted to the spot.

“I will bid *you* good-night, Mr. Thornton,” he said coldly. “You are a witness that I have not played the selfish brute with my cousin.”

“Good-night,” said the lawyer with unconcealed lack of cordiality. He took his departure, omitting congratulations to the new heir.

Charles’s face was not pleasant to see for a moment after the door closed on the lawyer. Presently he transfixed Dennis with a steady stare. Dennis had cause to congratulate himself that the amber glasses transfused some of the light of that piercing glance.

“Dennis,” he finally said, “you have heard the provisions of the will. You have heard me offer shelter and protection to Miss Eleanor. You have been a witness to her suspicion and ingratitude. I can do no more. She must leave this house within an hour. You and Ann will see that she takes what she pleases with her. Deny her nothing—but when the door closes behind her you are neither of you to communicate with her again under any circumstances whatever. Do you understand?”

“Yes, sir,” said Dennis immovably. “Shall I call a taxi, sir?”

“A taxi?” Charles hesitated a moment. “A



taxi! Yes, why not?" There was a shadow of a smile around the corners of his mouth.

Dennis shifted to the other foot.

"Miss Eleanor has no money to pay the fare, sir."

"Well, what do you propose to do about that?" inquired the affluent heir.

"I thought you might, perhaps, advance the money, sir," Dennis ventured.

"You heard the terms of the will," said Charles sharply. "That taxi would cost me my whole inheritance, and you have seen for yourself that Miss Eleanor would scarcely be grateful if I did pay the price."

Ann had exceeded her usual limit of forbearance in abstaining from taking a hand in affairs. Now she burst forth:

"For the love of God, Mr. Charles, is it that Miss Eleanor is to go forth into the night alone, and her without money and no place to lay her precious head? Sure, you might let her stay here this night unbeknownst to yourself, and then where's the harm to your inheritance?"

Ann had beautiful eyes of true Irish blue with a little dark shadow about them which emphasized their blueness. They were now fixed pleadingly on Charles.

"She may stay on my uncle's terms," he replied coldly. "I have no power to offer her any other."



“Then a curse will be sure to fall on every penny you have, you mark my words, sir, even to the last copper laid on your cold, dead eyes,” she blurted forth. “Spare yourself that, Mr. Charles, for the love of God.”

“Ann,” he said, “did it ever occur to you, by any chance, that you talk too much for the strict propriety of your position? If not, let me remind you now that when I want the advice of my servants I shall not be restrained by diffidence from letting them know. Now, I will inform you, not because it is your right, but because it is my will to tell you that your curse will rather fall on Miss Eleanor—a beautiful girl with charm enough to make any man willing to risk the electric chair for—walking the city streets alone at night. One night of it will bring her back to me, if there is enough of her left to get back. So don’t worry about her. Run along now and get her away before I count a hundred. If she stays over the hour, I shall not have a shelter to offer her when she comes.”

His voice was cold, cruel, and exultant, and the two horrified servants made haste to get away from his hateful presence.

As they precipitately entered the hall they encountered Eleanor. She was dressed in a smart tailored suit of brown duvetyne and a close-fitting hat of the same color. In her hand she carried a small patent-leather suit-case, and an umbrella

neatly rolled in a silken case. She was bearing herself regally. Her cheeks were slightly flushed, her eyes shining, and every inch of her body expressed self-possession and determined purpose. She appeared quite unconscious of the new heir who watched her from the threshold, whither he had followed the servants. Neither did she take any notice of the distressed couple who stood paralyzed and helpless other than to say imperiously:

“Open the door, Dennis!”

Dennis sprang to obey her, dismayed and distressed at her apparent intention of not throwing a word or a look at her faithful friends. Did she consider them a part of the new régime and henceforth not to count in her life, they wondered. Ann had scarcely grasped the situation before the door opened and she saw Miss Eleanor pass over the threshold carrying her chin well up, breast forward “like a queen goin’ to her coronation itself,” she expressed it afterward.

Ann did not see the swift, meaning glance Eleanor threw at Dennis as she passed him; but it assured him of her confidence, at the same time reminding him of the portrait with its warning message to “watch out.”

## CHAPTER XII

### AN EAVESDROPPER

**W**HEN the inhospitable door of her uncle's house—or rather the new heir's house—closed behind her, Eleanor descended the flight of stone steps down which old Jasper had gone on his last journey, and, on reaching the street, turned to the right and walked briskly away.

Across the street a sedan car picked up its motor and moved in the same direction. At the corner it stopped, and when Eleanor reached that point Lawyer Thornton was standing beside it. He raised his hat.

“I wondered, Miss Bowen,” he said, “if this outrage could conceivably happen. May I ask where you are going?”

She was still carrying the air of bravado which she had assumed for Charles's benefit, but her heart was fluttering suffocatingly. She wished she had donned her army uniform; it would have been some protection. In her agitation she could not control herself to reply.

“When I drew up that remarkable will,” he went on. “I did not realize you were a member of Mr. Bowen's household. I think I sensed some-

thing of the situation to-night. I may be unduly apprehensive, but I feared that the suddenness of this news might have found you unprepared financially; and since the terms of the will forbade your receiving even a temporary loan from the heir, and it being after banking hours, I waited to see if I could be of any service to you. Can I do anything for you to-night? A temporary loan, perhaps?"

Still she could not find words to reply.

"Can I take you to a hotel, or perhaps you would prefer to go to friends?" he urged gently.

His manner was so different from the soulless automaton with whom she had just been speaking in her uncle's house that she found her voice to say:

"I thank you. For the present I have all I need."

Her words unconsciously to herself sounded coldly courteous.

He hesitated for a moment. He had a dim suspicion of the truth, and sensed the emptiness of the bravado. Then he drew a business card from his pocket.

"The firm of Thornton and Brownley are at your disposal," he said, and, after another moment of hesitation, he added a visiting card which he happened to have with him—"Mr. and Mrs. Randolph Thornton"—with the residence address added. Surely this proud girl needed friends



desperately. He himself was growing more and more indignant at the severity and cruel malignity of the will.

“If you need friends,” he said gently, “won’t you do Mrs. Thornton and myself the favor of coming to us?”

She made no response, and after an interval of waiting which he felt he could not in decency prolong, he lifted his hat gravely and said:

“Good night, Miss Bowen. Think it over and don’t forget.”

Eleanor watched the car disappear and immediately regretted her repellent manner. She might—nay, she knew—she would need friends desperately, and she had estranged the first and perhaps the only person who was in a position to advise her. She made an involuntary move as if to overtake the car and apologize for her rudeness; but it had passed out of sight.

She mechanically placed the card in her handbag and walked straight ahead for some time. Then she crossed the street and turned back in the direction from which she had come. She had an uneasy sense of being followed, due to nerves, she believed. Nevertheless, the feeling was so persistent that she did not stop when she came opposite the house from which she had been ejected, but walked on. There was no one visible when she reached the house again. She could see no light in the library, and all the front of

the house was in darkness. Charles had probably assumed residence already and had retired to revel in pleasant dreams of his new possessions. Glancing swiftly up and down the street to assure herself that her suspicions were unfounded, she slipped noiselessly into the areaway and made her way to the side entrance. In the shadow of overhanging vines she waited and listened again, peering back over the way she had come. Surely she had not been mistaken. Of a certainty that was a human figure moving in the shadow of the syringa bushes. She would wait. It might be a casual passer-by stopping to light a cigarette. No, the figure moved too stealthily. She was sure it was to get into better position to watch her movements and that Charles would immediately learn of her presence in the house. She turned and rapped gently on the door.

It was immediately answered. The door flew open and she heard a rapt exclamation, "It's herself, no less!" and she was snatched to Ann's agitated bosom.

"God be praised!" ejaculated Dennis, swallowing an uncomfortable lump in his throat.

"You blessed dears!" exclaimed Eleanor, detaching herself from Ann's encircling arms. She was now heartily ashamed of her conduct to Mr. Thornton and indignant at being followed. She suddenly became animated and determined.

“Dennis, I want you to do something for me,” she said.

“Sure you do, Miss Eleanor,” he answered heartily. “Who else would you be askin’ to do it, whatever it is?”

“I want you to go to my room and bring me my revolver. You’ll find it just inside the brown English traveling bag, in the pocket. Don’t let Mr. Charles hear you if you can help it. If he should hear you, busy yourself with seeing that the windows are closed or something. I’ll wait for you here.”

“Sure you’ll wait here,” declared Ann. “Wherever else would you be waitin’, I’d like to know—unless you’d like to go to your little room above,” she added.

“No, Ann, I’ll explain when Dennis comes back. Go, Dennis, please.”

“I was just waitin’ to ask if that’s all you want. I’ll bring the whole contents of the room, if so you want them,” he assured her.

She smiled affectionately at him. “No, Dennis, just the revolver. I’ll tell you all about it when you come back.”

Dennis departed promptly. There was no way of passing from the back part of the house to the family rooms on the second floor other than by the front hall and staircase. The stairway fortunately set far back in the hall so that Dennis could pass through the dining-room and reach it



without passing the library, through the door of which he could see that a light was still burning, by which he divined that Mr. Charles was still there. He reached the upper hall unobserved and spent a little time with the somewhat complicated fastenings of the foreign bag. He found the object he was seeking, refastened the bag, turned out the light, and softly opened the door. Closing it quietly, he reached the head of the staircase and was about to hurry past the door of old Jasper's bedroom when he heard low voices in the hall below. Dennis was above listening to conversations not intended for him, but he believed the exigencies of this occasion warranted a departure from his usual high standard of conduct. He placed his ear as close to the well of the staircase as he dared, and listened. He gathered that some one stood outside the open door talking in low tones to Mr. Charles, who was apparently standing inside.

Some instinct prompted him to move nearer. In the gloom of the upper hall he could lean unseen over the stair railing where it made an angle directly above the heads of the speakers. From this vantage point he could hear the grumbling tones of the visitor, but at first could not distinguish the words.

Charles's reply, however, came in a distinct, unguarded tone:

“Well, what the hell if you have been working



your bean! Do you expect a royal flush in every hand?"

Dennis could not hear the reply.

"Well, what of me? Here I've been working for seventy-two hours on an infernally ticklish job, to say nothing of the shock to my nervous system when old rattle-bones made his get-away. Damn him! He let me in for the most repulsive job of my life. That sort of thing is offensive to my fastidious nature. That's more in your line, Buggs; but there are some things you can't do, you know. But that don't prevent your hanging around with your paw stretched out. You're running true to form now, Buggs. I hire you to watch a certain person, and instead of being on your job, here you are talking about your own damned carcass."

Buggs mumbled a reply that Dennis did not catch.

"Can it, right now," said Charles sharply, "and tell me where she is, and why you are not on your job. Go to it, I tell you, and make it snappy."

The man addressed muttered a grumbling protest, and stepped from outside into the dim light of the lower hall, and Dennis could now hear his words plainly.

"When she left here," he reported, "she went south on the Avenue four or five blocks. She was followed by a sedan—"

“The deuce you say!” exclaimed Charles in a startled tone. “Who could that have been?”

“I twigged it was that lawyer you had here,” explained Buggs.

“Well, I’ll be hanged if I ever thought of that. What happened?” urged Charles.

“When he got to the corner of Fiftieth Street he got out of his car and waited for her, and when she come up he spoke to her.”

“Did it look as though they had an appointment?” came Charles’s voice in somewhat disturbed accents.

“Naw,” said Buggs confidently. “Nothin’ doin’ on that. When he first spoke to her, she tossed up her head like a flipped filly, but after a while she chewed the rag with him.”

“What did they talk about?”

“How the hell do I know what they talked about? Do you think I’ve got ears that can hear half a block off?” snarled Buggs.

“Oh, no,” said Charles suavely, “nothing of the sort. I don’t think you have anything that’s of any account. I’m only surprised that you were on your job at all, and not up at the Zoo looking at the monkeys.”

“If you don’t like my sleuthing, do it yourself and be damned,” muttered Buggs.

“Well, you must do me the justice to admit that I didn’t go out of my way to get you to sleuth for me. Yours is an entirely self-appointed job,

recollect," said Charles exasperatingly. "But go on. What did she do then?"

"She took something out of his hand and put it in her wrist bag, and then he got into his car and drove off. Then she hopped it down for a coupla blocks, crossed over again and came back to this house. She looked all 'round cautious like and then she beat it 'round the corner and got in through the side gate. I was just in time to see her knock on the side door, and it opened like she had pals inside, but it shut so quick I couldn't see who let her in. And she's somewhere in this house now," he concluded.

In his dismay that Eleanor's retreat was discovered, Dennis nearly lost his balance; but he heard the relieved tones of Charles saying:

"All right, Buggs. Good job. That's just what I expected. If everything had gone as I figured it would, I could dismiss you for the rest of the night, she'd stay right here without watching, for she has no other place to go. But that cursed, meddlesome lawyer has butted in and now there may be the devil to pay. I'm pretty sure she'll stay here all right, but you better stick around all night to make sure."

Buggs protested at this, but Charles went on, unheeding, "You can sleep under the syringa bushes with one eye open— And, Buggs—if you hear any peculiar sounds around about midnight, as if the Devil is let loose, don't let it worry you.



A pure, undefiled saint like you has no cause to be afraid of the Devil, eh, Buggs?"

Dennis heard the light laughter accompanying the jest, and gathered that the speech was intended for flattery.

Buggs chuckled evilly.

"Betcher life, if the Devil's around he ain't goin' to pass you up to lay hands on me. You can pipe that, Gentleman Jim."

Before the words were fairly out of his mouth, Charles Bowen thrust out his arm and seized Buggs by the throat.

"None of that, you damned, blasted idiot," he hissed in a rage. "If I ever hear you call me by that name again, I'll bump you off where you stand."

Dennis moved cautiously nearer the head of the stairs in time to see Charles Bowen release his startled victim with a violent shove that nearly threw him from his balance. Buggs fell backward through the open door, tottered a moment on the steps, and threw his assailant a look compounded of abject terror and intense fury—a look not pleasant to see, for the revengeful rage predominated.

The man inside was quick to see his error, and as swift to attempt to repair it. He passed his hand over his forehead and then stretched it out to Buggs, who instinctively receded.

"Forget it, Buddy—forget it, man," he apolo-



gized in an almost wheedling tone. "Dammit all, Buddy, you're not going to cash in, now, just as we're ready to take the pot," he urged, as the frown on Buggs' evil face threatened to become a permanent fixture.

"Come on, now," he went on. "You know I haven't had a wink of sleep for three days and nights, and I forgot myself. Let's finish up this job together, you and me, and we're fixed for life."

Dennis could not hear Buggs's response to this appeal, but he saw Charles Bowen thrust his hands in his pockets and draw them out again, forcing their contents on the man outside.

"I got ten thousand for you, Buddy. I swear it," he said, "but in the excitement I lost it. God! You don't know what it means, man, to pull off a stunt like that. You're bound to slip a cog somewhere, and my slip was in losing that roll I got for you. But you're welcome to all I've got now."

Buggs stepped into the light again to examine the money.

"Hell!" he sniffed scornfully. "I could lift more'n this off a newsboy in one swipe, and get a night's sleep in the bargain."

Charles appeared to consider that the man's mood called for instant and effectual propitiation, for he thrust the thumb and forefinger of

his right hand into an inner pocket and drew forth a jeweled ring.

“Take this, Buddy. I’ve been keeping this sparkler for you for a surprise.”

He held it where a ray of light fell from the hall lamp upon it, and scattered innumerable points of brilliant lights from a superb diamond. Buggs suppressed any betrayal of his cupidity and condescendingly accepted the jewel, muttering sullenly as he dropped it into his coat pocket:

“The hell you have! You better see you don’t get fresh again. I’ve heard say money goes to the head; but if you try to double-cross me again you may damn well find yourself without either head or money.”

He wheeled about and stalked sulkily down the steps and disappeared.

Charles stood at the door for some seconds without moving. Once he made a movement as if he would follow Buggs. Then he stepped back as if he thought better of it and closed the door.

He drew his watch from his pocket and consulted it under the sickly light in the hall.

“Eleven-thirty. No sleep for me for another night,” he yawned. His face was haggard from fatigue. “I’ll take twenty minutes,” he concluded, still consulting the dial of his watch. He slipped the time-piece back into his pocket and returned to the drawing-room.

When Dennis, a few minutes later, tiptoed softly down the carpeted stairs, he heard the sound of heavy breathing and knew that Charles had dropped instantly into profound slumber.

Fearing that Eleanor would question his prolonged stay, he hastened to the kitchen. On the way he paused a moment in the butler's pantry to regain his composure so that Eleanor might not read the signs of his distress in his face. How could he warn her without frightening her into inaction? Call up the police? There was no telephone in the miser's house. Go personally and report? That would be leaving the women unprotected during his absence. He glanced at the pistol in his hand, and resolved to put it in her possession at once. He knew that she could shoot, and shoot straight.

## CHAPTER XIII

### TRESPASS

**W**HEN Dennis returned he found Ann wringing her hands and expostulating with Eleanor. At sight of him she broke forth impetuously:

“Dennis, man, there’s a man without in the bushes that’s been following Miss Eleanor, and she means to go out and kill the devil. For the love of God argufy with her, and prevent her from going to destruction.”

“Sure, you won’t do that, Miss Eleanor,” Dennis urged. “What’s the good of your going out to find trouble for yourself? It’s not becomin’ in a woman to go out by herself and shoot up a man.”

Eleanor laughed a little cynically, mistaking his agitation for fear for himself. She rose and held out her hand for the weapon; then quickly examined it to make sure that it was loaded.

“I’ll leave these things here,” she said, glancing at her bag and umbrella, “until I come back—if I come back,” she added quickly.

At this Ann wailed and implored her not to expose herself to the threatening danger.

“He’s a man,” she warned. “What show has a woman against him?”



"My little gun will shoot as far as his, Ann," Eleanor assured her. "He will have no advantage over me there."

When they found that she was determined to go, "Wait a minute, then, till I get the ax, and I'll go with you," said Dennis.

"And I the rolling pin," said Ann, suiting the action to the word.

They sallied out, Eleanor in advance, and Ann valiantly in the rear. Across the street a night patrolman was leisurely passing, his night stick swinging carelessly in his hand. When they neared the syringa bushes Eleanor raised her revolver and said in ringing tones:

"Come out of there, you fellow skulking in the shadow. I can see you. I'm going to fire on the count of three. One—"

Before she had time to realize that, standing in a ray of moonlight drifting through a broken cloud, she offered a conspicuous mark for her opponent, she was astonished at the suddenness of the response to her command.

Out from the shadow dashed the skulking figure of a man, bending low to avoid the expected bullet, and vaulted the iron railing in a lightning flash. Another instant and the policeman darted after the flying figure, and the footsteps of both could be heard far along the street, breaking the silence of the night.

No hard-pressed division was ever more re-

lieved at the arrival of reserves than the valiant little band who waited breathlessly the result of the chase. Presently the triumphant officer returned with his prisoner.

“What’s the charge, lady?” he asked.

“Trespass,” declared Eleanor promptly.

“Nothin’ doin’,” snarled the man. “I’m a private detective and I was on duty here.”

“A private detective, eh?” jeered the officer. “Well, then, upon my word, you’re an honor to the profession, you are, jumpin’ the fence and runnin’ like a hound on the moor at the sight of two women and an unarmed man—no disrespect to your weapon there,” he smiled, glancing at Dennis’s ax.

“You can ring up the house and ask Mr. Bowen if I’m not a detective,” insisted the prisoner.

“I can tell by your mug you’re no detective,” replied the policeman, “but if you are, you’d better arrest yourself. You’ll go far to find another jail-bird with a mug like yours.”

He had flashed his light on the reluctant prisoner’s face, who made futile attempts to prevent his getting a good look at him.

“No, I can’t say I’ve seen you before, but I’m thinking the Captain will have a better memory than me. For a private detective you’re over-anxious about that right hand pocket of your coat there.”

With a quick movement, the officer thrust his

hand into the pocket and drew forth, in spite of the prisoner's frantic effort to prevent him, the diamond ring. He held it up and examined it by his electric torch, not unmindful the while of the furtive movements of his captive's eye measuring the possibilities of escape.

It was a magnificent solitaire in a well-worn, but very quaint and original setting.

"My mother's," gasped Eleanor.

"That settles it!" promptly decided the officer.

The prisoner appeared to be a dull, slow-witted, sullen man of deliberate movements, but in the second that the officer was off his guard in the disposal of the ring, a swift movement of the right leg threw the officer flat on his back, and before he fairly struck the pavement, he heard the sounds of marvelously swift feet receding in the distance.

The policeman sprang to his feet and gave chase. Eleanor and her little army waited a few minutes for their return and then fled to the house and locked and barred themselves in their quarters.

But for Dennis there was no sleep that night. By the unexpected escape of the arrested man, and the sudden disappearance of the patrolman in pursuit, Dennis had lost his opportunity of communicating his newly gained knowledge to the police. And as he thought it over in the watches of the night, he wondered what he had to tell.

Merely that the master of the house had employed a night watchman. And wouldn't the wily Charles claim that it was for the protection of Miss Eleanor, as by the terms of the will he could not offer her the protection of his house.

The ghost of old Jasper made the midnight hideous again with his sepulchral laughter; but that troubled Dennis less than the discovery of Mr. Charles's perfidious character, and the fearful danger that he believed threatened Miss Eleanor.

What was the "repulsive job" that revolted Mr. Charles's fastidious nature? And why had he had no sleep for seventy-two consecutive hours? And what was the "job" he was finishing which would fix him and Buggs for life?



## CHAPTER XIV

### ELEANOR VISITS THE LAWYER

**E**LEANOR rose the following morning from the old sofa in Ann's sitting-room where she had lain, fully dressed, the latter part of the night, resolved to go to Mr. Thornton and apologize for her rudeness, and ask his advice. Her nerves were a bit shaken after the events of the night. The phantom laughter of old Jasper had again made the night hideous. The bolts that Dennis had made secure before retiring seemed to possess the charm that the running water had for Tam O' Shanter's witches, for the laughter, while more malignant and more prolonged, was certainly more distant. Ann had taken refuge again under the bedclothes, and Eleanor had kept her revolver close at hand.

Dennis, knowing what he knew, and what he deemed best not to communicate to the women that night, was alert and watchful, and while he was apprehensive, he was not afraid.

After breakfast, which Dennis served her in the sitting-room, Eleanor left the house by the service entrance, Dennis insisting on accompanying her and carrying her suit-case. She carried

her revolver in her hand until she turned the corner on the Avenue. She was, however, unmolested. There were no lurking shadows in the syringa shrubs; and if there were eyes in the windows of the uncanny house, they did not disturb her.

After getting a little distance from the house she slackened her pace and filled her healthy young lungs with the crisp autumn air. On every side of her were sane and orderly people engaged in normal occupations. Overhead was a narrow strip of blue sky where friendly white clouds were hanging, their fleecy edges parting and sailing away in fantastic forms. Gradually she shook off the hideous nightmare. The sight of a policeman on the corner brought a little frown to her brow as she thought of the captured burglar, but she postponed consideration of him until she had settled other matters.

By the time she was admitted to the lawyer's private office, she had regained a fair measure of self-possession. Before she seated herself in the chair which he offered her, she said contritely:

"First, I want to apologize to you for my rudeness last night, Mr. Thornton. I am thoroughly ashamed of myself. Can you forgive me?"

The exercise had brought a faint color to her cheeks. He smiled pleasantly and held out a cordial hand, quite another man from the frigid automaton who had read the hateful will.

“Now that you have come and relieved my mind of some apprehensions I had concerning you, there is nothing to forgive,” he said, holding her hand in his. “Things look differently on a bright pleasant morning. I was foolish enough last night to fear you had nowhere to go.”

“You weren’t so foolish as you think,” she replied, seating herself in the chair which he again proffered. “I have come to beg you to say again what you said last night so that I may tell you how reckless I was to treat your offer in the ungracious way I did.”

He was sure she had been through an unpleasant experience since he last saw her.

“I ought to thank you for giving me the opportunity to do penance in some manner for drawing up that infernal will,” he responded.

“That was a mere matter of business,” she affirmed. “Your offer of assistance was quite another matter—you certainly didn’t look for any business from me,” she smiled.

“Hardly,” he admitted, smiling with his lips, but his eyes hardening at the memory of the unnecessary harshness of the will. “Not from that estate surely. May I ask how long you have lived with your uncle?”

She told him. His eyes narrowed as he listened to the tale of her cousin’s return and her uncle’s growing miserliness toward her. From time to time he put in a question that prompted



a fuller revelation, and he was soon in possession of the fact that Uncle Jasper had administered her mother's estate, which she had always supposed was ample, and that when she entered his house, she was absolutely dependent on him. She had soon spent what she brought back with her in replenishing her wardrobe, and her allowance only covered the bare necessities. He even discovered that when she so scornfully rejected his offer the evening before, she had been literally penniless, and that she had returned and spent the night with the servants.

"Incredible!" he exclaimed. "What kind of a man is this cousin of yours? Do you like him?"

"No, I loathe him," she frankly admitted.

"Why do you loathe him? Because he made love to you?" he asked with a kindly smile.

Thornton talked quietly, but he was seething with indignation. Experienced as he was in the frailties of the human heart when legacies became a matter of dispute, he had never encountered a case to equal this one in premeditated cruelty.

"Partly," she said. "I liked him at first, well enough. He was so kind to everybody, and especially to Uncle Jasper. I assure you it takes some virtue to love Uncle Jasper, and Charles has spent a great deal of time with him, especially lately since he has been so near his end."



“How did he know he was near his end?” Thornton asked quickly.

“Why, we have been expecting it any moment the last few weeks,” she replied.

“Who has been expecting it?” Thornton inquired.

“All of us, Dennis and Charles.”

“What made you expect it?”

“Why, Dr. Davison said there was some complication of the heart, and that he was liable to drop off any moment. That was why Charles was with him so much at the last,” she explained.

“Did you hear Dr. Davison say that?” he questioned.

“No, but Dennis did,” she replied, a little puzzled frown between her eyebrows.

“He didn’t seem very near dropping off when I saw him,” said Thornton, recalling the scene in the library the day he made the will.

“No—” said Eleanor. “Charles thought he was pretending to be more feeble than he was.”

“Why did he think that?”

“I suppose because uncle came downstairs and made the will, and walked up alone, and then took this journey without taking either Dennis or Charles with him,” she replied, wondering why this wasn’t perfectly obvious to the lawyer.

“Then he didn’t think it until the day your uncle made the will? Before that he believed as you did?” persisted Thornton.

“I’m quite sure of it,” she replied.

“And yet you say he spent a great deal of time with him. He had then constant opportunity to observe him. Strange that he could be so thoroughly deceived. And Dennis, too, you’re sure he was really deceived?”

“Oh, I’m sure Dennis was deceived,” she asserted positively. “Only the day before Uncle went away, he had a very serious attack and Dennis was sure he was dying then. He told me that Charles used a very powerful remedy to revive him, and I recall now that Dennis spoke of Charles’ great distress when the remedy for a time seemed to be unavailing. He sent for Dr. Davison in great haste. Dr. Davison had difficulty in restoring him,” she went on, as the incident was revived in her memory, “and he told them he could not possibly survive another attack of that kind. He warned them, too, that it would probably be followed by another very soon. I think we had every reason for thinking him a very sick man,” she concluded earnestly.

“Ye-s, I should—think—you—had,” agreed Thornton musingly. He sat for some time gazing thoughtfully at a corner of the ceiling while he stroked his chin with thumb and forefinger.

“You must have had plenty of opportunity to study him,” he continued presently; “this Cousin Charles, I mean—forced to live in such close relations with him. Do you think he was sincere

in his reluctance to part with an old man who was the only barrier between him and a pot of money?"

"Charles didn't live with us," she made haste to assure him. "He refused uncle's offer of a home with him, and had an apartment at the Vanderbilt. Thank heaven, that was one thing I was spared," she ejaculated fervently.

"You haven't answered my question about his sincerity," he suggested.

She looked thoughtful a moment.

"I can't say as to that," she said slowly. "He seemed genuine enough. I'm sure Dennis doesn't doubt it."

More concentration had come into his eyes as she proceeded with her revelations, and now he sat and tapped his chin thoughtfully with his eyeglasses.

"I think I see light," he presently remarked. "Miss Bowen, were you aware of a previous will?"

"No. I do not think there was one. I do not believe Uncle Jasper could bring himself to make a will in favor of a female heir, nor could he bear to give his money to charities, and so I believe there was no other will."

"Hm," said Thornton. "There isn't the slightest doubt, Miss Bowen, that your cousin was in a panic when your uncle fell ill that day, for, at that time, there probably was no will. If he had



died intestate, half the fortune would have gone to you.”

“And he mustered all his scanty strength to smite me a cruel blow in that will.” She couldn’t quite keep the bitterness out of her tone. “I wouldn’t mind the loss of the money so much. I regarded that as the last obsession of a senile old man, but the other stipulations—” She winked back a tear, but scorning the self-pity that it implied and remembering her new resolution, she tossed her head defiantly to show that she had perfect command of herself.

Thornton stood up, went over to the bookcase and gazed at the heavy tomes without seeing them; then took a turn or two about the room with his hands in his pockets, stopping presently before her. She was contemplating the embroidered monogram on a handkerchief faintly bordered with blue, but she looked up quickly and rose to her feet.

“I am detaining you,” she said. “I forget you are a busy man. I’m so sorry—and I didn’t tell you what I came for—” she gasped in dismay.

The sudden cognizance that she must presently leave these sheltering walls, as remotely entitled as she was to their protection, brought a startled, hunted look into her eyes that Thornton had once seen in the eyes of a fawn at bay.

He motioned her to be seated again, at the same time dropping into a chair opposite her.



"And I am just getting ready to hear it," he said lightly. "I had to have a minute to digest what you've already told me. You want to tell me something about yourself, don't you?"

She nodded, and hesitated a moment, seeking the right formula. How did one go about begging?

He guessed her trouble and helped her out.

"You want to tell me that this sudden change of residence has left you financially embarrassed. Is that it?"

She laughed a little ruefully. "It is tactful of you to call it a change of residence," she said. "It would be truer to say a loss of residence, for I have nothing in the world, Mr. Thornton, but my wardrobe and I'm not sure of that. Not even a car-fare." She held out her hands, palms upwards, to show their emptiness. "I want your advice, Mr. Thornton!" she said, dropping them again with fingers clasped in her lap. "What can a girl do who hasn't been trained to anything? I could be a companion to some invalid or possibly a governess. But I must have something immediately. I have literally no place to go when I leave this office. I can't go back to stay with Dennis and Ann for fear it may compromise them, and, too, I don't believe it is safe."

She glanced around the office as if appealing to its friendly walls for shelter.

"If I could tide things over until—until—I was

to have been married in Paris, Mr. Thornton, but was called away by the sudden illness of my mother. And some time, just as soon as—Colonel Merriman is free to leave—and come to me—I'm sure he'd be grateful to you." She smiled bravely, but her color had receded, and the dark circles were showing under her eyes. He had not interrupted her while she was speaking, but the sympathetic understanding in his eyes had encouraged her to go on.

Now he smiled broadly.

"Now, this is getting interesting," he said. "If there is anything my wife loves it is a romance. She will simply mob you and keep you for this fortunate young man. I'll get her to come down and get you. I can see myself displaced in her affections from now on, but we'll get her here, and let her speak for herself."

He took the receiver from the telephone and placed it at his ear.

"That you, Molly?" he said after the proper connections had been made. "Listen, my dear, I want you to come down to the office and meet the young lady I told you about last night and be prepared to take her home with you as your guest for an indefinite period."

The wires buzzed a second or so and he spoke again.

"She is here now—yes—all right. Thank you, dear. What's that? Once more."

He listened a moment, and then hung up the receiver with a laugh. "Mrs. Thornton has to have her little joke with me," he said, "but she's coming right down to take you to our home with her as our guest. You'll like her," he said positively, "and she'll like you."

"Oh, Mr. Thornton," said Eleanor, winking back a rush of tears, "how could I have been so rude to you last night! I don't deserve this from you. How can I thank you?" She held out her hand to him, and he held it tightly while he patted it with his other hand.

"You gave me a bad night, young lady. When I told my wife about the provisions of that will, and how I waited to see whether you would leave, or rather how you would leave, and of your walking out of the house alone with your suitcase and not calling a taxi, and of my leaving you standing alone on the street corner at that time of night, she almost insisted on my going out again to look for you. She said I should have kidnaped you on the spot. It takes a wife to let a man see himself as others see him, and she said of course no girl would trust herself with me as I must have seemed reading that will. She'll be here in a jiffy."

And she was. She came in smiling, a plump, tailored figure all in brown from her smart velvet toque to her trim booted feet. On account of her vivacity she seemed younger than her staid,



middle-aged husband: She approached Eleanor without ceremony, quite as though they had been parted for a few hours.

“My dear!” she said, taking the girl in her arms, a feat somewhat difficult to accomplish, for Eleanor was quite a head taller than her benefactress. “We are so glad to get you back again.”

“And I am so glad to be taken back again after my treatment of Mr. Thornton last night. I don’t deserve it, I assure you,” said Eleanor, returning the embrace.

“How could you be expected to know what to do after that—that—” She turned to her husband, her indignation showing in her fine brown eyes.

“But let us not talk about it,” she protested, “you look thoroughly fagged. What have you to take with you? Nothing but this little weekend case?”

She glanced swiftly around, and, seeing nothing but the suitcase, she shot a significant look at her husband. His eyes met hers with grim understanding—the prospective heiress of the Bowen millions reduced to this was what they meant.

“This is my entire fortune,” laughed Eleanor, picking up the suitcase, “unless you list my umbrella, which might, as a last resort, be used as a roof to cover my head.”

They passed out of a door that led them directly



to the main corridor. Thornton was about to accompany them to the elevator when a look from his wife's eyes warned him not to do so. While they were waiting for the elevator Mrs. Thornton exclaimed:

"Oh, excuse me just a minute. I forgot something."

She went swiftly back to the office and closed the door behind her.

"Where *did* she spend the night, John? I can't wait another minute to know?"

"She went back by the service door and spent the night with the servants," he replied, cutting off every word separately to give vent to his indignation.

"What a monster that uncle was!" she declared.

The elevator had barely descended below the level of the floor when another visitor to Thornton was announced; and Dennis, cap in hand, was ushered into the lawyer's presence. It was a full hour later when he left with a buoyant step and a relieved mind.

## CHAPTER XV

### A THEORY ABOUT THE GHOST

**A**T the curb stood a smart coupé, and this too was brown, with a gold monogram. Into this Eleanor followed her energetic hostess, who sat at the wheel and steered the car skillfully through the traffic on Fifth Avenue. Passing the First National Bank, Eleanor caught sight of a figure emerging which she recognized as Charles. She involuntarily shrank back in her seat, but not before she caught what seemed to be a distinctly worried expression on the face of the heir.

“His new honors seem not to fit him comfortably,” she thought.

But Mrs. Thornton did not give her opportunity to dwell on herself or her troubles. She chatted vivaciously as her gloved hands rested lightly on the wheel, and it was not until she had turned the car over to the uniformed chauffeur, and Eleanor was taking off her hat in the charming, restful room which had been assigned her, that Mrs. Thornton commented on her fatigued appearance.

“You spent the night with the servants, John tells me,” she said, softly. “It was monstrous.”

“It wasn’t that,” said Eleanor, observing her haggard face in the mirror. “I had done that before. It was the only cheerful place in the house—but—there was something else.”

“Well, never mind what it was, my dear, you just forget it. We’ll have lunch presently—just you and I—and then you must lie down and sleep all the afternoon. John will make me give an account of my stewardship, and I want to make a good showing.”

She talked lightly, giving a touch here and there to the curtains, and to the pink chrysanthemums which filled the room with their bright glow.

Left alone, Eleanor sank into a chair and, leaning her head against the little comfy pillow, which was cannily designed to just fit into the back of the neck, she allowed herself the luxury of relaxation. Repose did not come all at once. She had not realized, until she found herself safe within these sheltering walls, how very tense she had been. If the strained nerves did not at once respond to the opportunity, at least no further strain was accumulating.

After she lunched with Mrs. Thornton in a handsomely appointed dining-room she retired again to her safe room, and after the luxury of a bath, she stretched her weary limbs between fragrant, soothing sheets, and presently fell asleep.

When she awakened, her trunk had arrived. She wondered how the lawyer had managed to secure it, but she was very glad to avail herself of its contents. And very handsome she looked in her black dress of soft lusterless crêpe as she offered her hand to her host in the drawing-room.

“Would you know her for the same Miss Bowen, John?” significantly remarked Mrs. Thornton.

“Won’t you please call me Eleanor, Mrs. Thornton?” smiled the owner of the name. “It will make me feel more at home.”

“Eleanor then; I’m glad to call you that. I don’t like the name of Bowen. It is hard. Just the kind of a name for your Uncle Jasper and for your Cousin Charles. I’m glad you are going to change it.”

“Do you like Merriman better?” laughed Eleanor with a soft light in her eyes.

“Merriman—a merry man after the gloomy creatures you’ve been living with—well, I should say I do.”

After dinner Thornton gradually led up to the subject of Cousin Charles again.

“Speaking of your Cousin Charles,” he began, “I gathered from what you told me this morning that you never knew much about him until he turned up a few weeks ago.”

“No,” she explained, “our families were not intimate, in spite of the relationship. Of course



I heard of his daring flights when I was in France, and I was so proud of him and wanted to meet him. But when I met the hero in real life I assure you I was sadly disillusioned. I don't want to meet any more of them. I *want* to preserve my illusions. I can't bear to think that magnificent fighting was done by men who are bullies and cowards in private life."

"Aren't you a little severe on your cousin? I understand you to say you have nothing on which to base your—distrust, shall I call it?"

"You are a lawyer and you want facts," she laughed a little grimly, "so you'll just scoff when I tell you about the ghost."

"The ghost!" exclaimed both host and hostess at the same instant.

"Yes," she said, her lip curling a little, "'the ghost of Uncle Jasper.'"

Mrs. Thornton glanced quickly at her husband. Had the poor girl, then, suffered so keenly that she was having delusions?

The hard-headed lawyer narrowed his eyes. "Suppose you tell me about it," he said gently enough.

She told him of its first appearance on the night after Uncle Jasper went away and of how they were frightened at the time; and of their precautions against it on the following night. She hesitated in her tale at first, momentarily expecting interruptions of "Nonsense!"

“Nerves!” but to her surprise he listened with unfeigned interest and put in questions from time to time to refresh her memory.

“Where was Cousin Charles the first night you heard it?” he asked.

“He was in Connecticut. He went to Smithville at once when he learned of Uncle Jasper’s death, and didn’t return until the afternoon of the next day.”

“How do you know he went that night?”

“He said he was going, and I suppose he did—but why do you ask?” Her clear, truthful eyes met his in surprise.

“Oh, just an inquisitive habit I have,” he smiled. “And last night the ghost walked again, did it? Did you think it was a sure enough ghost?”

“*Never!*” she denied with a slight curl of her lips. “But I didn’t think it a pleasant thing, and I believed it to be a menace to me.”

“What do you think his motive was, assuming for the moment that it was Charles?” he asked.

“You’ll think me silly, Mr. Thornton, but I’m going to make a clean breast of it and confess to you just what I did think.” She hesitated a moment and looked straight at him as if fortifying herself against his expected derision.

“Tell me everything,” he said invitingly. “I’m sure it won’t be silly. You’ve surely had provocation enough to think anything.”

“I should think so,” declared Mrs. Thornton. “I wonder she kept her head to think anything.” She was listening with such absorbed attention that she had dropped three stitches in the brown sweater she was knitting.

## CHAPTER XVI

### THE CASE AGAINST CHARLES

ELEANOR determined to make a clean breast of all her suspicions and aversions.

“I have been thinking it strange, Mr. Thornton,” she began, “that Uncle Jasper did not make his will until the very day of his death. He *knew* that he was liable to drop off any day. Dr. Davison told me that he had told him so. He explained to me the nature of the heart trouble which was too technical for me to understand, but he told me that he had explained it to Uncle Jasper, and had told him to put his affairs in order. Now *why* didn’t he do it?”

She shot the question defiantly at the lawyer, but the only reply she received was a counter question.

“What do *you* think was the reason?”

“Well, here’s where you’re going to think me silly, perhaps, but the more I think of it the more logical it looks to me. I believe Uncle Jasper was not so bent on leaving his whole property to Charles as Charles thought or tried to make me believe. He didn’t know him. For all he knew Charles would squander it all in no time.



And Uncle Jasper would rise from his grave to defend his money—”

They both smiled at the unwitting allusion.

“No,” she disavowed, “I don’t think that was the ghost’s business with me. He had no call, as Ann would say, to persecute me. *I* couldn’t squander his money.”

“But you think Uncle Jasper had not made up his mind what to do?” he queried, leading her back to her story.

“Yes, that’s just what I think. Just as he could not bring himself to make a will in my favor when I was the only heir, so he couldn’t decide to entrust the whole of it to Charles. So he vacillated until he had that almost fatal attack the day he went away.”

“But you haven’t made out a very strong case against Charles yet. He did, finally, make the will in Charles’s favor and he certainly had no hesitation about you at the last.”

For a moment she studied her nails, which were pink and well-shaped, the while a slight frown gathered on her forehead.

“I’m mean, Mr. Thornton, just despicable,” she avowed, “but you might just as well know the depth of my depravity. I think, now, that Charles has been working against me—all the time. Uncle Jasper refused to see me almost immediately after Charles came home. Before that, while he was not affectionate, he was not vindic-

tive. I was physically comfortable, and he made me an allowance. Charles represented to me that he withdrew the allowance because of his jealous hoarding for him and against all Charles's pleadings. Then Charles offered to share his allowance, which seems to have been a very liberal one, with me. Imagine it!"

She drew up her head in the manner that Charles had always disliked, and her lips curled disdainfully.

The lawyer shifted his position.

"You haven't, even yet, made out such a bad case against Charles," he said deliberately, watching her intently while he talked. "Charles was in love with you, and you didn't respond with sufficient warmth. It may have been only an error of judgment for him to think a display of generosity on his part would win you. And if he did influence your uncle to be harsh toward you, was it not perhaps that his kindness might stand out in such marked contrast that you'd just have to fall for it?"

Eleanor winked hard for a moment, then she flashed forth.

"I *knew* you'd think me horrid, Mr. Thornton. I thought so myself at first, but I don't any more. In fact, since I have gone all over it with you, I am more than ever convinced that I am right. I wish now I had gone straight up to Uncle Jasper's room, and found out for myself. It was

too late, though, when I thought of it. Poor Uncle Jasper!" she murmured.

"Well, perhaps you are right," he admitted. "Now to the ghost. What do you think Charles's motive could be to do such a dastardly thing as that?"

"I think he didn't know that I was in that part of the house the first night, and that it was an attempt to frighten Dennis and Ann away from the house. That would leave me absolutely alone with him and so forced to marry him." She made a gesture of disgust.

"But why couldn't he discharge them?"

"That would be showing his hand to me, don't you see? You can't imagine what a hypocrite he is. I'm only just beginning to see it myself."

She frowned, hesitated a moment, and then went on: "Mr. Thornton, I can't help thinking he knew what was in that will—that in some way he overreached himself. To be sure, my solution of the mystery was not reached until I knew the contents of the will." She hesitated again thoughtfully.

He watched her intently while she appeared to be reconstructing the occurrences of the past few eventful days.

"He must have known I was in the servants' quarters last night," she went on as if reasoning it out with herself for the first time, for the man arrested on the grounds claimed that he was a



private detective. I didn't believe it then; he had my mother's ring, and I was sure he was a burglar. But what if he was sure enough a detective?"

"What's that!" exclaimed Thornton. "What's that!" forgetting for an instant his rôle of being nothing more than a sympathetic listener.

She told him half defiantly of how she was sure some one was following her while she walked the street the evening before, and of her sudden determination to "be a man" and see the thing through, whatever it was; of Dennis going to her room for the revolver, and then she laughed a little foolishly as she described the sally on the intruder.

"It seems funny now, Mr. Thornton, but it wasn't funny at the time. I can face a danger that I *know*, but I have to be desperately reckless not to be a little scared when I walk out to fight an unknown something in the dark and am not sure that there is a safe retreat behind me."

She was appealing to him now, excusing herself for her melodramatic action, and she shrank a little from the laughter she expected to hear.

But there was no laughter in the eyes which met hers. On the contrary there was a hard, steely glow in them, and something more, an intensity, an eagerness for more information.

"And after that," he said, "what did you do?"

"I went up the servants' stairway with Ann



and Dennis, and we bolted all the doors after us as we went; I forgot to tell you that I had Dennis put bolts on every door yesterday morning. Charles had requested me to stay until after the will was read, and as it was going to be read so late in the evening I had to spend another night in the house and—and—I just anticipated the ghost, that's all." She laughed nervously.

"And you were justified in your precautions, were you?"

"Yes, indeed," she smiled. "Even Dennis is convinced now that ghosts, try as they may, can't pass bolts any more than Tam O' Shanter's witches could cross the running water."

"Just what did the ghost do? Go over that again, please."

"The intention, I am sure, was at first to frighten the servants. Did you ever hear Uncle Jasper laugh? He had a most disagreeable combination of discords, and there was no mirth ever in his laughter. It was always most unpleasant and creepy. Well, he just laughed the first night, that was all, and it was horrible, unearthly. It didn't seem to come from a human throat; it just floated about in the atmosphere. It crept in through the transom and floated about the ceiling, and moved up and down the corridor. I ran to Ann's sitting-room, from which their bedroom opens, and locked myself in before I

really knew what had wakened me. And then, when that weird, unearthly sound enveloped me, I just miserably collapsed in a dead faint."

There was nothing in the lawyer's appearance but the hard look about the mouth to register the seething indignation within.

"How did the servants take it?" he asked quietly.

"Well, you know I was hardly in a position to judge," she smiled. "All I know is from testimony heard the next morning. According to Dennis, he stood his ground, firmly defying the powers of the nether world and this; and as Ann was submerged in the bedclothes and I unconscious there is no one to dispute him. I will say this for them, however," she went on more seriously, "they behaved as well as I did, and last night they were undoubtedly frightened, but stood loyally by me all through the night."

He sat with half-closed eyes thinking deeply for a few moments, and then he suddenly asked:

"Is that all?"

"All? *All?*" she exclaimed. "Yes, that is *all!* If there had been any more I should not be here to tell the tale."

"And I'm not going to let you ask her another question to-night," exclaimed Mrs. Thornton, jumping up suddenly and hastily putting the sweater she was knitting into its basket. She had

been swallowing lumps in her throat all through Eleanor's recital. "I'm going to take her straight to her room and put her to bed. Come along, you poor child."

"Just a minute more," pleaded Thornton. "I want to ask her about that ring."

"Not another question to-night," firmly decided Mrs. Thornton. "Why, do you realize this poor child has been on the rack for two nights now without a wink of sleep?" And without hardly giving Eleanor an opportunity to offer her hand to her host to bid him good-night the sympathetic little woman swept her out of the room.

The lawyer paced slowly back and forth the length of the drawing-room, his chin resting on his breast, hands clasped behind his back while he marshaled all the facts he had gathered from Eleanor and Dennis, and tested them by his suspicions. It was late when he went up, but he had decided to do a little investigating of certain matters on his own account.

"Molly," he said, just before turning out his light preparatory to retiring, "what was the name of that man Eleanor was going to marry in Paris?"

"Merriman, Wayne Merriman," she replied sleepily.

"Wayne Merriman? Where have I seen that name lately?" He searched his memory a moment. "By Jove! Molly, wake up! I saw it on

the passenger list of the *Aquitania*, which is due to-morrow or next day.”

Molly waked up so effectually that she fairly bounced into Eleanor’s room to impart the good news.



## CHAPTER XVII

### MISTAKEN IDENTITY

WHILE the affairs of the Bowen family were following their predestined course, the S. S. *Aquitania* was steadily churning its westward way across the Atlantic—unconsciously bringing its contribution to those affairs.

On a certain day of the voyage two men in the uniforms of officers of the United States Army were sitting together in a snug corner on the sheltered side of the deck. Opposite them, leaning one elbow on the steamer rail and leisurely smoking a short-stemmed pipe, stood a small, inconspicuous, but well-built man in a Scotch tweed overcoat which the wind, at intervals, flapped sportively about his sturdy legs. He had keen dark eyes which were at the moment casually occupied in gazing across the white-flecked, emerald-blue surface of the water to where the smoke of a passing steamer broke the horizon line.

Farther down were long lines of passengers stretched out in wicker deck chairs, swathed like mummies in various colored rugs, dozing, smoking, or reading.

The two officers were returning from their long watch on the Rhine. They had encountered each other in the smoking room on the first day of their passage and had been drawn together temporarily as men with similar experiences are wont to do on shipboard. They had just emerged from the dining-saloon, where they had partaken of an over-abundant luncheon, and had lighted their cigarettes and were smoking in comfortable silence. Presently the man at the rail became aware that they had drifted into a discussion of cases of errors in the reports of missing men during the war. He glanced fortuitously in their direction, and recognized the men as two officers whose names he had seen on the passenger list and whom he had seen in the smoking room. The elder, bronzed and grizzled, the one with the oak leaves on his shoulders, and the long vari-colored ribbons stretching across his breast, he had heard addressed as Major Pickering. The younger man, wearing a colonel's insignia and likewise the colors of foreign service, he knew to be Colonel Merriman.

So much he observed with casual interest, and resumed his observation of the distant ship.

“The strangest case of mistaken identity I have heard,” Colonel Merriman was saying, “is that of an aviator whose death was reported by a supposed eyewitness. The body was brought in by a couple of brancardiers, and his funeral was at-

tended by the other members of his squadron. His death was officially reported, and his family received official notification. Recently he has returned alive and well to his family."

"Yes, I suppose there were many such cases. The wonder to me is," replied the major, "that they made as few mistakes as they did, but in this case they must have had the machine for identification unless it came down inside the enemy lines."

"No, it came down in flames inside the French lines, but it was destroyed beyond recognition," returned the Colonel.

"It's a poor squadron that doesn't know its own machines, no matter how badly wrecked they are," remarked the other officer dryly. "What was it? A free-for-all fight?"

"No. There were only two allied planes and one enemy plane," responded the Colonel.

"It isn't according to the traditions of the Air Force for two allied planes to be beaten down by one Boche," responded the Major. "What was the other fellow, the eyewitness, doing?"

"It was a matter of the other pilot's Lewis gun failing to work, as those guns were in the habit of doing," explained the Colonel. "His gun jammed after he had fired a round or two, and before he could get it in working order again, the fight was over. You know a minute is a long time in those air fights."



“I don’t get your point about it being a case of mistaken identity,” pursued Pickering. “If the second pilot took part in the scrap he wasn’t probably more than fifty meters away—likely nearer. You can see the markings on those machines hundreds of meters away, and those pilots know every make of a machine from their own little Spads to the monster, fast-climbing Fokkers, and they know what tactics to use with each make. The second pilot was undoubtedly in a funk.” He tapped the ashes from his cigarette on the arm of his chair with some decision.

“That goes without saying. That is the point I am making, Major. His story was accepted apparently without question. As he told it, he and another pilot went out in single-seater Spads to act as an escort to some bombarding planes that were going to operate on an aërodrome. On their way they sighted an Albatross zigzagging along toward the French lines and they chased it. The nearest pilot fired and killed the observer, then looped to get below for another shot. Evidently he had speeded up too much, for he passed beyond him. The Boche quickly took advantage of the situation and sent a hot fire after the Spad. The second pilot’s machine gun had jammed, and all he could do was to circle around and worry the Boche by appearing to be maneuvering for position. It was all over in a minute, however. The disabled pilot saw a blade of his companion’s



propeller fly into the air, then the wings buckled up and broke away, and the rest of the body burst into flames and went down. The Albatross apparently did not wish to continue, for it rose rapidly and disappeared in a cloud."

"I haven't got your point yet about the mistaken identity," persisted Pickering.

"Why, it simmers down to just this: the pilot who brought in the report got rattled. It was not his companion's Spad that took part in the fight, but another machine altogether."

Major Pickering threw away his cigarette end, took another from his pocket, struck a match, and, holding the flame between his cupped hands, lighted the weed before he made any further remark. He was thinking that Colonel Merriman was unwarrantably credulous for a soldier seasoned to all manner of army fables.

"Well, where's the other fellow been all this time?" he asked, tossing the match away.

"A prisoner in Germany," replied Merriman. "It appears that he had engine trouble soon after starting out, and fell behind the rest of the detail. When he got his motor going again he spotted a lone machine far above him making toward the enemy lines. He rose and had almost come up with him when he received a shot from another machine which he hadn't spotted. His tank was smashed, and he had to volplane down. He had no choice of a landing place and he

crashed down, badly shaken up, into a shell hole inside the enemy lines. When he came to he was on a stretcher being carried to a prison camp. The strap that held him in his seat had saved him from being thrown out and crushed. He had several bullets in him, and suffered from shock. The medical attention he received was nil. The result was that when he was released after the Armistice he had forgotten his own identity. He wandered into a French hospital, he doesn't recollect how, and was finally restored to his normal condition. Naturally when he returned to his family he was received like one risen from the dead."

Pickering smiled skeptically and again inwardly wondered at the ingenuousness of this seasoned officer who must have been "fed up" with extravagant and improbable tales told in camp, taking this very improbable one seriously.

Merriman sensed the skepticism which Pickering had unconsciously expressed in his manner, and, slightly offended, suddenly dropped the subject.

"I think I'll take a turn around the deck," he said, abruptly rising and brushing the cigar ashes from his uniform.

Pickering immediately regretted having given cause for offense. With a desire to restore himself to favor, he returned to the subject.

"Don't be in a hurry," he urged warmly.

“That is the strangest case of blundering I have heard of since I’ve been in the service. Do you happen to know the name of the man who turned up?”

“Yes,” Merriman responded, a trifle coldly. “It is Bowen. Charles Yancey Bowen, a nephew of Jasper Bowen, pretty well known in financial circles in New York.”

“Charles Yancey Bowen!” exclaimed Pickering, turning startled, incredulous eyes on the speaker. “Yancey Bowen returned? Alive and well?”

“There is no doubt about it,” declared Merriman. “Why? Do you know him?”

“Do I know him! I *knew* him. He was a combat pilot in the Escadrille de Volontaires. ‘Fancy Bowen,’ the other pilots called him because he was always pulling off fancy stunts. I have the evidence obtained on the spot that Yancey Bowen was killed near Royes-Neville—brought down in flames by a German Fokker. He fell just within the first line trenches at a spot where a rise of ground hid him from the enemy, otherwise they would have had a hard time rescuing the body. The other machine that went out with him, and whose pilot witnessed the fight was only a quarter of a mile away. He had fired a volley at the Fokker, and then his gun jammed. He said Bowen’s machine broke out two thousand meters from the ground, and he was near enough to see



the silver under-surface of the wings and tail when it began falling out of control. I have heard the story of that fight on the spot and at the time it happened, and there was no question whatever of the identity of the man. Moreover, they found the plate of his machine, and there were other marks of identification. I can take you by the hand and lead you to the exact spot on the little farm near Royes-Neville where he is buried," insisted Pickering warmly.

"You must have buried the wrong man or else his astral body is continuing his existence," insisted Merriman, "for he is certainly at his uncle's home in New York now, or was there fifteen days ago. Somewhat shattered, it is true. Has some trouble with his eyes, but otherwise as sound as a man returning from a Hun prison camp could be expected to be."

Pickering stared at the speaker as if doubting his sanity, but Merriman was undoubtedly speaking from absolute conviction.

"There are, undoubtedly, two men of the same name," said Pickering, thoughtfully. "The Charles Yancey Bowen I knew was a combat pilot in the Escadrille de Volontaires. I knew, medically, every man in the squadron, and I wrote a personal letter to Jasper Bowen of New York informing him of the details of his nephew's death. There can be no doubt of his death. But it often happens in families that two nephews



bear the same name. It is doubtless true in this case," said Pickering, his annoyance at Merri-man's insistence ebbing with the certainty that he had discovered an explanation to what seemed an extravagant tale.

"But in this case, there are not two nephews of the same name," declared Merriman, emphatically. "Charles Yancey Bowen of the Escadrille de Volontaires, reported killed at Royes-Neville, is the man I am speaking of, and I assure you I have good authority for my statement that his was a case of mistaken identity."

He reached into his pocket and drew forth a packet of letters. He scrutinized the dates, and selected one from the packet.

"My informant," he said, "is a niece of Jasper Bowen, and therefore cousin to Charles Yancey Bowen. She is, at the present time, living under the same roof with him in the house of their Uncle Jasper. I have here her account of his return, of the overwhelming joy of the childless and infirm uncle, and the story of the imprisonment and subsequent release of the nephew—all the details of the story running through several letters, just as I have told it to you."

He withdrew a closely written letter from its envelope and scanned it rapidly.

"Would you like to hear the story as I learned it?" he asked.

“Thank you,” responded Pickering. “It would interest me very much.”

He listened attentively and very gravely to the reading, tightening the muscles of his lips and slightly shaking his head in negation at various points in the recital. When it was finished he asked: “You know the writer of this letter well?”

“I have the honor to be her affianced husband,” returned Colonel Merriman, looking Pickering squarely in the eye and then refolding the letter and replacing it with the others in his pocket.

Pickering murmured congratulations and stammered out the banality that “truth is stranger than fiction,” then relapsed into silence. He wondered if the handsome officer had met the girl overseas and had fallen a victim to boredom and propinquity. She was certainly “stringing him” with this tale.

“Well, I think I’ll take a turn around the deck for exercise,” said Merriman, regretting his introduction of the subject, “or my uniform will be too small for me at the end of this voyage. Will you join me, Major?” he asked, pulling his tunic free from the wrinkles it had acquired while he was sitting.

“No, thanks,” returned Pickering. “I have some letters to write before we land, and I think I’ll not put them off any longer.”

Pickering watched the muscular figure in its

well-fitting uniform swing off with a military step, and he had to acknowledge that he presented a handsome and dignified appearance; and as he recalled the bronzed face with its intense gray eyes under their strongly marked brows, set either side of a high-bridged nose, and the strong lines about his firm mouth, together with the assurance of his bearing, he found it impossible to believe him a man easily imposed upon.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### A CONNECTING LINK

**M**EANWHILE the man at the rail, who had accidentally been within earshot of their voices when the two officers began talking, became mildly interested in the discussion. As the conversation proceeded and became a matter of controversy he moved nearer the speakers, where he made sure not to lose a word. At one point, a sudden gleam of understanding came into his eyes; and it was only by an effort of the will that he suppressed an exclamation when Merriman proffered the satirical remark that Charles Bowen's astral body was continuing its existence in New York. Now and then as the discussion continued his keen eyes dilated, and once he turned and looked casually about him, taking in the long line of recumbent passengers, and then resting his eyes in one fleeting, penetrating glance on the two officers.

After they rose and left their seats, the stranger with knitted brows gazed steadily for some time at the changing surface of the troubled sea, as if he expected the thing he was searching his memory for to turn up from its mysterious



depths. He was evidently rewarded, for in a very short time he struck his closed fist on the rail and ejaculated:

“I have it! I’m sure of it.”

He turned and walked rapidly around the deck, so absorbed in his thoughts that he nearly collided with a nurse-maid struggling with a refractory child, got tangled up in a ball of yarn which rolled inopportunistly beneath his feet from the lap of an industrious lady in one of the chairs; and finally stumbled against a steward who was serving a cup of hot water to a dyspeptic-looking individual in tweeds. He murmured abstracted apologies, and presently becoming aware that he was passing Major Pickering he paused beside him.

“Major Pickering?” he said.

The Major withdrew his attention from the game of shuffleboard which he had been watching on the deck below and transferred it, in some surprise, to the owner of the voice.

The stranger plunged at once into the business at hand. “Allow me to introduce myself,” he said. He reached into his pocket and produced from a worn leather cardcase a card which he offered to the officer.

The Major glanced at it with slight hauteur. “Mr. John Capwell,” he read with a rising inflection. “I don’t seem to recall having had the pleasure of meeting you before.” Realizing in-

stantly that he couldn't in human possibility remember all the men whom he had encountered overseas, and that this one was probably some one he should be expected to remember, his manner softened and he hastened to add: "But I am glad to have that pleasure now," and smiled pleasantly.

"No, I don't think you have met me before and you would not have met me now if I had not accidentally overheard your conversation just now about that resurrected pilot," responded Capwell, returning his cardcase to his pocket.

The Major stiffened perceptibly.

"I just happened to be standing near you," Capwell made haste to explain, "and didn't listen intentionally until you reached a point where I scented a mystery and then my professional instinct got the better of my manners. I moved nearer where I could hear. I may as well tell you," he glanced about and lowered his voice, "I went over in the Intelligence Corps, and when I got my discharge I established a private detective agency of my own. I have been over on a little business connected with that now. I have been turning over the contradictory statements in the Bowen business and I have formulated a theory which I would like to lay before you if you will take a few minutes to listen to it."

Major Pickering bridled a little.

"But I don't take that story seriously," he

protested. "It is utterly impossible. I *know* what I'm talking about. I don't know of any pilot except Guynemer whose death caused such universal regret as that of Bowen's. The fight was witnessed by some artillerists as well as by his companion, and everything was as regular as Time, and I myself attended his funeral. I *know* what I'm talking about."

"So much the better," responded the detective, "and your friend is positive he knows what he's talking about. That's what makes the case interesting. The surer you know he is mistaken, the better for our purpose. *You* know the man is dead, and *he* knows positively he is alive. Where can you find a more exciting field for my activities? If you are correct, then some one is posing as the dead man."

"How *could* a man pose in his own family? It is absurd on the face of it," rather impatiently retorted the Major.

"That depends on what kind of a family it is," responded Capwell. "A deaf and blind old grandmother might easily be imposed upon. How about this uncle you wrote to? He is probably nearest of kin?"

"I didn't know his family," replied Pickering slowly. "I met him many times. There seemed to be no one nearer than the uncle."

"You don't know whether he lived with the uncle?" questioned Capwell.



“No. He was a younger man than I. I knew the boys medically, and often much about them, but I didn’t know anything about Bowen’s family. You heard what Colonel Merriman said about the girl and of how rejoiced they were at his return. There seems to be no doubt in the girl’s mind, but, by George, it can’t be—it *can’t* be, I tell you.”

“I am glad to hear you stick to that,” said Capwell heartily. “Now the girl is the only fly in our ointment. How can he put it across with her?”

“The girl is stringing Merriman,” exclaimed Pickering impatiently.

“Hardly possible that a girl that Colonel Merriman would choose for a wife would make her cousin’s tragic death the subject of a practical joke,” Capwell objected.

“Romanticism!” scoffed the skeptical officer. “She has probably inherited the old man’s money, and she is testing his devotion by pretending to be penniless, and all that dime novel business.”

The Major was disturbed and irritated at the thought of having the sacrificial death of the popular young aviator made the subject of a penny dreadful mystery.

“I have a theory, Major,” ventured Capwell. “It has flaws, I’ll admit. I don’t see, as you say, how a stranger could keep up the deception in



Bowen's family; but if it could be done I know the man who could do it."

Pickering turned astonished eyes on Capwell.

"You do!" he exclaimed.

"I think I do," quietly asserted Capwell. He looked about him. The stewards were bringing up afternoon tea and cakes; the passengers were moving about, swinging rapidly around the deck on exercise bent. A man and a girl flushed with their exercise in the stiff wind paused at the rail beside them near enough to hear their conversation.

Capwell, profiting by his own experience, had no mind to let his words fall on a casually listening ear.

"I can't tell you here. Too many people about. How about the upper deck?" he queried as he perceived that the wind had driven most of the passengers below.

The Major, inwardly protesting, but half curious, followed his new acquaintance to the upper deck and smiled derisively at his precautions to secure seats where they could not be overheard. Having satisfied himself in this respect, Capwell accepted a cigarette and lighted it from the glowing end of the Major's. Then he began to talk.

Major Pickering was a man with an obstinate turn of mind who didn't like to have his preconceived notions upset. It was a little difficult,

therefore, for Capwell to inoculate him with his own ideas; but as he proceeded he had the satisfaction of seeing his listener's eyes glow with interest.

"You must be right," he admitted. "There is an impostor there and a devilishly clever one. Colonel Merriman *must* be convinced when you lay all this before him."

But Colonel Merriman was not so easily convinced. He was exceedingly skeptical at first, and resented the cocksureness of the detective. But when Pickering had again related in detail all that he knew personally of the circumstances of young Bowen's death, and reminded him of the improbability of a flyer failing to identify a machine in his own squadron when he was close enough to see the rudder break away; and called his attention to the fact that the plate of Bowen's machine was found and that no question of his identity was raised at the time, nor of the good faith or courage of the pilot who witnessed the fight, Merriman was obliged to admit the probability of the facts. He reread Eleanor's letters and discovered in the later ones a lack of enthusiasm for Cousin Charles. He imparted this discovery to the detective and read to him and Pickering all that part of her letters relating to the return and subsequent movements of the cousin. To the intense satisfaction of Capwell

he elicited from the letters the knowledge that Eleanor had not seen Charles since they were children.

“Capital!” he exclaimed. “Everything coming our way. That is the only thing that bothered me. How he could put it over on a bright young woman who knew him. She *didn't* know him. That settles it. I've got him. Your little game is up, Mr. Lazarus.”

## CHAPTER XIX

### WHO IS CHARLES BOWEN?

**W**HEN, a few days later, the *Aquitania* arrived at quarantine, Merriman received a wireless message which he would have been at a loss to interpret had it not been for Capwell. It read:

“Will meet you at pier. Should we miss each other, do not go to Uncle Jasper’s. Come to Thornton and Brownley, Equitable Building.”

“Something’s happened,” declared Capwell with ill-concealed satisfaction. “I know the firm of Thornton and Brownley. They are lawyers.”

But they did not miss each other. Among all the mass of faces turned eagerly to the pier, Eleanor saw but one. And Colonel Merriman with his powerful glass identified her long before the mammoth liner maneuvered into her slip; and from that moment he saw nothing else. Miss her! He couldn’t have missed her if he had been a blind man, so unerringly would his heart have found her.

And Eleanor couldn’t remember afterward just how it happened that they found themselves alone in a taxicab with her hand held tightly in his and all her apprehensions and fears dissolved into



joy. It was necessary for him to report immediately to Washington, and both were reluctant to be separated again, but Mrs. Thornton, whose guests they were, decided that they must submit to a temporary separation, and that he would return from Washington as speedily as possible when the wedding would take place at her house. Reluctantly they submitted to the plan, and made the most of the day that was theirs.

Capwell's unromantic soul chafed at the delay this demanded. He was eager to interview Eleanor, and begin the chase of the impostor at once. But Mrs. Thornton was inexorable. The lovers must have their day. Unwillingly Capwell yielded and consoled himself by evolving a plan to make use of Major Pickering's one day at his disposal. That officer was only too willing to assist in the unraveling of the mystery, for he treasured the memory of the heroic young aviator.

It was with pleasure therefore that he agreed to intrude upon the man impersonating Charles Bowen and report his impressions to Capwell. A sleuth in Capwell's pay produced the opportunity by discovering where Bowen was wont to dine, and at what hour. Accordingly, just as Bowen had seated himself at a corner table in the dining-room of the Vanderbilt Hotel that evening, and was studying the menu card preparatory to giving his order, Pickering was being ushered by the head waiter to the same table. At

first sight of the man before him, Pickering was almost startled out of his composure, so strikingly like Charles Bowen was he. His slender shoulders, his pose as he lighted the cigarette in his hand, even the gesture with which he flicked out the flame of the match. Surely this *was* Charles Bowen, and the report of his death was a hideous mistake. Pickering was on the point of joyfully greeting him when the man under observation looked at him through his amber glasses without giving a sign of recognition.

Pickering dropped into the chair which the obsequious waiter was holding out for him, then studied with meticulous care the menu card placed in his hand.

After giving his order, he let his eyes again casually fall on his vis-à-vis. Was there a change in the man's manner? Some instinctive warning that he was under surveillance? At any rate there was manifest a distinct displeasure with the waiter for having seated a stranger at his table without his permission.

Pickering felt the tension of the moment. Save for the amber glasses concealing the eyes, which should be large, and brown, and luminous, the man before him was Charles Yancey Bowen, erstwhile combat pilot in the Escadrille de Volontaires. And yet, why did he not recognize the officer? To be sure, he had suffered loss of memory, and had wandered about in French hospitals

and only recently recovered. Perhaps he had not wholly recovered. What if there were still blank spots in his memory? And if so what an injustice to the heroic young flyer to harbor suspicion of his identity.

These thoughts followed one after the other through Pickering's mind while he waited for his order to be filled. If he could only see behind those glasses he would know for a certainty. There could be no mistaking the reckless gayety of the large brown eyes of the incomparable flyer. He became obsessed with a desire to remove that baffling disguise. He began to speculate on what measures could be taken to gratify his desire. He might bribe the waiter to precipitate an "accident"; or he might accidentally brush against him himself when he rose from the table. He rejected both these methods, the former for its effect on the permanency of the waiter's "job," and the latter as "conduct unbecoming an officer and a gentleman." Capwell, he thought, would have had no scruples.

But Capwell was out of the running in this particular case, because if the impostor was the man he suspected, Capwell was known to him and would have been immediately recognized. Pickering was just the man for the job, because he had known Bowen well; and if this were indeed Bowen, mutual recognition would follow and the "case" go up into thin air.



But no recognition of Pickering followed. Indeed, after that first glance, there was no evidence that he was aware of Pickering's presence at the table. His manner repelled advances which, however, would not have deterred the officer from making them if he could have overcome his bewilderment and could have been sure that this was or was not Charles Bowen.

It didn't seem possible to him that two men could be so exactly alike in form, feature, and gesture. There was even the chiseled chin with a rather deep lateral line across it. But there were those baffling glasses.

He thrust the tines of a slender fork into the bosom of a succulent oyster, and imperiled his digestion by continuing to do strenuous brain work while consuming food.

The fact that Bowen did not recognize him was not conclusive proof that the man opposite him, also consuming food, was not Bowen, because of that loss of memory. On the other hand, there was the overwhelming proof of the aviator's death. He decided emphatically that the man must be an impostor and was about to rise and leave the table, suffocated with the thought of the proximity of the dastard's presence, when the presumptive impostor tossed his head with a little gesture so peculiarly Bowen's that it could not be mistaken.

Pickering wavered again, and began to weigh



all the evidence once more. He was engrossed in this occupation when he heard the sound of silver on a waiter's tray. His neighbor had paid his bill, tipped the waiter, and was rising from the table. There was something lacking in the manner that had been Bowen's in his treatment of the servant, and again Pickering vacillated. And so between the two convictions he wavered with the result that he was not so cocksure of Bowen's death as he had been when Capwell first broached the subject on the deck of the *Aquitania*.

Capwell was disappointed. "Did you talk to him?" he asked that evening when they had gathered in Thornton's office for reports and consultation.

"No," replied Pickering. "I didn't. I meant to force myself on him and make him say something, but before I had clarified my thoughts sufficiently he had paid his bill and gone. If he is an impostor, he probably left as soon as he decently could. I think he has been in the army."

"He has been in the army all right enough," said Capwell significantly, "and the sight of your uniform didn't look good to him. He has reason enough not to want to be recognized by United States officers."

"Who is he anyhow?" inquired Thornton.

"Who is he?" repeated Capwell impressively. "He is the most dangerous, the most unscrupulous and probably the cleverest criminal in the

world to-day. He is wanted in many places. The story of his swindling the cream of society in Austria and Germany reads like a motion picture serial. In his varied career he has acted as agent of Ludendorff, the kaiser, the British War Office and other governments. In 1915 he was in this country engaged in German propaganda. He was arrested here, but escaped from a United States marshal, and then openly flouted the police for three months. Every day during that period he wrote to the newspapers, announcing where he would be at certain times during the day and daring the Federal officers to capture him.

He finally disappeared from here, and turned up in Germany, where he took part in the Kapp rebellion. I got wind of him in Vienna, where he constantly changed his name and address. He was finally arrested there for selling alleged false documents to the Czecho-Slovakian government. He was freed from that charge, but was expelled from Austria. All the embassies of Rome were circularized about his movements when he disappeared.

“For two years he was not heard from. It is believed that he was a spy for the German government during that time; and it had been my belief that the present state of unrest in the European countries was furnishing a sufficiently large field for his pernicious activities. But when I overheard the conversation between Colonel

Merriman and Major Pickering on the *Aquitania* the suspicion that he might be playing another rôle took possession of me."

"My God!" ejaculated Pickering. "And that girl has been living practically alone with him."

"No, not that," hastily interposed Thornton. "He seems to have some of the instincts of a gentleman, for he had his own apartment at the Vanderbilt."

"At the old man's expense, I suppose," suggested Pickering.

"Undoubtedly," replied Thornton.

"It's a long drop from Berlin high-brow society to Smithville Junction," mused Capwell, "but nothing that man does surprises me. When I get my traps all set here, it's me for Smithville Junction."



## CHAPTER XX

### BILL HAWKINS HAS HIS TROUBLES

**S**MITHVILLE, by grace of its being the nearest community to Globe Hollow, had, since the tragedy, taken unto itself an air of great importance. City newspapers mentioned the name, Smithville Junction, in the same paragraph with New York itself. The Boston and Springfield papers treated it seriously, whereupon the community threw back its shoulders and tilted its chin in recognition of the honor.

The inhabitants of large cities, in spite of a universal belief to the contrary, are as susceptible to sensational events, and as demonstrative in the emotions aroused by them, as the dwellers in small places. The only difference is that in the cities sensations follow one another in such rapid succession that their impressions are speedily blurred and sooner forgotten.

Smithville's emotions had hitherto been confined to disapproval of the minister's sermon or emulation of his wife's clothes, with an occasional fling at the young people's scandalous behavior at the Sunday-school picnic. But with the arrival of Charles Bowen on the day of the tragedy, and of Bill Hawkins's behavior since, Smith-



ville had come into its own, with the prospect of having a lively topic of conversation for the rest of its natural life.

On the day that Charles Bowen had arrived at the Junction to investigate his uncle's death, he had found at the station on his return from Globe Hollow most of the adult citizens of the village congregated to see with their own eyes a person so intimately connected with the tragedy. Consequently they heard the attack which Charles told Eleanor he had made on the cab-driver. Bill's evasive manner on that occasion, together with the psychological effect of Charles's subtle insinuations, caused the hitherto genial and popular cab-driver to be gradually ostracized.

Whenever two or three persons were gathered together after that they went over in detail the scene at the station.

"Did you have any controversy with him?" the nephew had asked.

Bill had declared there was no controversy.

"How much did you charge him?" Bowen demanded.

At this point Bill was said to have hesitated.

"I ask you this because, knowing my uncle's peculiarities about money matters, I suspect he haggled over the price and possibly refused to pay you. Now, am I right? Tell the truth, man."

Bill lighted his brier pipe, and puffed a cloud or two from it before he replied laconically:

“No.”

“No. What do you mean? I asked you what you charged him, and if he refused to pay you.”

“And I said ‘No,’ ” replied Bill.

“I don’t like your manner, my man. You are afraid to look me in the eye and tell me what you charged him. This looks very suspicious to me,” he said, turning to the bystanders.

They hadn’t thought Bill’s manner suspicious. It was only what they would have done themselves if questioned in the dominant and somewhat theatrical manner the bereaved nephew was employing.

“Out with it, man,” he blustered. “How much did you charge him?”

“Oh, that?” said Bill. “My usual price, five dollars.”

“And you say he paid it without haggling?” sneered Charles. “Now I know you’re lying. My uncle never paid anything without haggling.” He offered this statement to his public again.

He had called Bill a liar, and Bill didn’t rise and smite him. Jo Wheeler and Jim Mooney exchanged glances.

“Did he offer you anything else?” he continued, as Bill puffed in silence.

Bill hesitated a moment.

“He gave me some money to buy him some supplies, and I bought ’em and took ’em up to him,” he replied.

“Did you have any change left?” pursued Charles persistently.

Bill removed the brier pipe and looked squarely at his inquisitor.

“Say, mister,” he drawled, “you got a little of the old man in you, ain’t you?”

This was more like the real Bill. Jo Wheeler and his companions exchanged significant glances again.

Charles retreated from his position. Public sentiment was shifting to Bill.

“How did you find things when you got there this morning? Was the fire completely out?” he asked.

“I think it was,” Bill replied. “The ashes may have been hot, but there wasn’t no blaze.”

“How long did you stay there after you *discovered*”—he spoke the word with an emphasis designed to cast more suspicions on Bill than an avalanche of phrases—“the body?”

“You can bet your boots I didn’t stay no longer’n I could help,” declared Bill positively.

“Then you didn’t pick up anything or see anything lying around?” sharply quizzed Charles.

“There wasn’t a blamed thing around *to* pick up,” said Bill. “Trunk, grip, man and all reduced to ashes.” He made a grimace as though the subject were excessively disagreeable to him.

“How long before you got there do you think



the fire occurred?" relentlessly pursued Charles.

"Don't ask me," said Bill. "I ain't no clairvoyant."

"What did you do when you made the discovery?"

"*Do?* I made a bee-line for town in quicker time'n I ever made before, I can tell you."

"Did you get out of your car at Globe Hollow?"

A barely perceptible pause ensued before Bill replied:

"I did not."

"No?" The tone in which Charles uttered this monosyllable conveyed skepticism, suspicion, and challenge.

Bill shot a swift glance at his inquisitor, and dropped his eyes before the look he met there. Then he pulled himself sharply up.

"Say, mister, how long did you stay there yourself? 'Twasn't no picnic park, now, was it? I'll leave it to you," he challenged.

"Not unless you saw something there that was worth getting out of your car for. I didn't, did you?" More of that accusing, contagious suspicion.

"There wasn't nothing there, I tell you. All the old man had was his trunk and grip, and the frames of them was found in the ashes," said Bill, with an awkward attempt at bravado.



“Were you the first man on the scene of the tragedy?” Charles was not yet ready to let go of his subject.

“I might have been, and then again, I might not,” said Bill. “As I told you before, I ain’t no clairvoyant, and I didn’t find no visiting card; but I was the man that brought the news to town, if that’s what you mean.”

“To whom did you bring the news?”

“I met Doc Gray just the other side of the village and I told him; and he told me to get the coroner.”

“Did you get him?”

“Yes, I got him,” admitted Bill.

“Then did you drive back to Globe Hollow with him?”

“No, he had his own rig.”

“Then, where did you go?”

Bill was getting very restless under this inquisition, but his inquisitor was relentless.

“I took a party over to the Normal School,” he drawled.

“And after that?”

“I went home, and now I’m here,” he replied caustically.

Charles had managed to make Bill appear to be concealing something. It was very apparent to those who knew him that he knew more than he was telling.

Charles drew on his gloves. He paused in the act of buttoning them to say:

“Then you know nothing about the large sum of money my uncle carried with him?”

Bill turned a dull red.

“I saw him put a roll of bills in his pocket the last thing before I came away,” he replied sullenly.

“And you never saw them again? Think a moment. Think hard.”

Jo expected to see the usually belligerent Bill Hawkins rise and slay the man whose very tone was an insult. Instead, he flushed a dull red which flamed on his big neck and ears, and turned on his heel, saying resentfully:

“I ain’t no prisoner in the dock. What right you got to ask me questions? I’m done.”

He turned and sprang into his car and drove rapidly away. A gleam of something—was it satisfaction, triumph?—flashed swiftly over Charles’s face and was as quickly gone.

When, later, Bill was as uncommunicative to his fellows as he had been to the nephew, whispers began to circulate. They passed from lip to lip, and the story grew and grew until Bill was definitely suspected by all and sundry of murdering the old man and concealing the deed by disposing of the body in the flames.

But what they did not know was that Bill after

his discovery of the body had walked the floor late into the night in troubled meditation. He smoked innumerable pipes of tobacco and exhausted his extensive vocabulary of profanity used in all its varying combinations. He finally put on his hat, and cautiously left the house. A careless neighbor had left a spade lying in his garden. Bill, avoiding the gravel path and stepping softly on the grass, cautiously secured the spade. Then he entered his garage, and felt in the darkness for something hidden beneath the cushions of his car. His hand trembled slightly as he drew forth a roll of bills. He quickly placed them in a tobacco box from which he emptied tacks and odds and ends of things, and disappeared into the darkness. He returned later with a somewhat relieved mind, for one cause of his trouble lay buried beneath the foot of an oak tree a mile and a half from Bill's house.

## CHAPTER XXI

### A LUMBERMAN VISITS GLOBE HOLLOW

**I**N the days that followed there was no more jolly camaraderie among the cab-drivers at the Junction. Whenever Bill appeared, conversation dropped and he ceased joining the group. He would drive up at the last minute, take his fare if he secured one and drive immediately away.

One morning he jumped out of his taxi as usual just as the passengers were alighting from the train. His quick eye saw that there were few fares this morning, and probably none for him, for he had lost his grip. Somehow he couldn't crowd the other fellows out and capture a fare by his catchy tricks of manner as was his wont. It was therefore with indifference that he watched a stranger alight with a little difficulty and look around him for a cab. To his surprise the man walked past the nearby cabs with their importuning drivers and scanned his closed car.

"Ah, you have a closed car. That's just what I want. You see I suffer from rheumatism and I don't want to risk getting wet. The wind is in the east and that's a sure sign of rain."



Bill skeptically scanned the cloudless horizon, but had no mind to pose as a local weather bureau. He opened the door of the cab and stepped back for his fare to enter.

"If you don't mind," the stranger said, "I'd like to sit in front with you. I'm a lumber buyer and maybe you could point out some good wood lots on the way. I want to go to Enright's lumber mill. I suppose you know the way."

"Sure I do," said Bill, brightening. He mentally registered ten dollars for the trip. "It's about nine miles from here."

The stranger proved to be somewhat of a bore, for he talked incessantly on the way about the price of lumber before and since the war and gave statistics that made Bill's head swim. Besides Bill had other thoughts as he drove along the same rutty, little used road over which he had carried Jasper Bowen to his doom.

As they came in sight of Globe Hollow, the stranger exclaimed:

"They've cut the lumber off this place pretty close, I see. I'd like to get out here and see what kind of trees they mostly get and what kind of a job of cutting they've done."

Bill stopped and the stranger dismounted. "Had a fire up here, I see," he commented. "Anybody been cutting up here lately?"

"No," replied Bill, "that's where that old man got burned to death."

"Oh, I read something about that in the paper. What was his name, now? I forget."

"Jasper Bowen," said Bill, turning his back to the ruins and fixing his eyes on the blue hills across the valley.

"Yes, I recollect now," said the stranger cheerfully. "How did it happen?"

Bill reluctantly and shortly related the details so distasteful to him, but so evidently relished by the curious stranger. The latter prowled about the burnt cabin with disgusting curiosity, Bill thought, although he had to admit that his observation was keener than that displayed by the coroner's jury.

"He must have built an enormous fire," the lumberman remarked, "judging by all these ends of regular cord wood. Got it from away over yonder from that pile, too," he observed, measuring the distance with his eye. "Must have been a husky old fellow to have dragged that wood all that way. What would you say? Pretty husky, was he, eh?" he inquired.

"Yes," Bill admitted, "he was husky enough; only thing out about him was his crazy notions."

"Oh, he had crazy notions, had he? How do you mean, crazy?"

Bill explained that any man was crazy who chose such a place to spend a night.

"Didn't I hear about his having a considerable sum of money with him?"

"Yes," said Bill, "and I might as well tell you that that nephew practically charges me with murdering the old man for his money and then settin' fire to the shack to cover up the crime."

"And did you?" said the stranger, suddenly turning his eyes full upon Bill.

"God, no," said Bill, shrinking instinctively from the penetrating gaze.

"No, sir, never. I got a good name except I'm accounted pretty sharp on a horse trade. But then the other feller allus had just as good a chance at lyin' as I had, and the odds was even anyhow."

"No chance of his getting you arrested, I suppose? Just throwing out hints, is he?"

"I dunno about that. I don't mind tellin' you I'm scared stiff. There's evidence enough to prove that somebody done it, but I ain't tellin' it. I ain't collectin' evidence for to hang myself, not so's you could notice it."

The lumberman manifested a friendly interest in the driver's predicament.

"Why don't you get a lawyer and tell him what you know?" he suggested.

"I'm afraid to. Gosh dang it! Lawyers are out to make money. If I show up enough money to retain a lawyer, they'll take that for proof that I stole it off the old man," Bill explained.

"I guess you're right there, especially if you retain one of these local lawyers who are already



prejudiced by the rumors. Why don't you go to a city lawyer?"

"Don't know none of 'em, and don't know as I could trust 'em if I did," said Bill. "I been wonderin' what to do. I reckon if I should try to board a train from here I'd be arrested. Every stranger I see I suspect he's an officer. Thought you was one of them detectives at first."

The lumberman laughed. "I haven't much use for detectives myself," he said. "I'm like you with your horse trade. The lumber business calls for a little harmless lying now and then, and I agree with you that there's a long shot between being a little sharp in a business deal and killing a harmless old man for his money."

"God, yes," said Bill, "but that don't help me none. I'm suspected and them detectives can run you down like bloodhounds. I've read about that there Sherlock Holmes feller, and what he couldn't do was a caution. Why, if you spit out a chaw of terbacca a mile and a half away from the scene of the crime he could tell how many front teeth you'd lost and how old your grandmother was when she died. Gosh, it keeps me awake nights all right enough."

"Well, if you have evidence against somebody else, why don't you give it up and free yourself from suspicion? That ought to be dead easy."

"But it don't free me, that's the hell of it. Why, stranger, I could go out in a ten acre lot



all by myself and be the judge and jury, and the hangman, and try, and sentence, and hang myself all in good and reg'lar order without no recommendation for mercy on the evidence I've got; and no higher court could find a flaw in the proceedin's. And yet, I tell you, I didn't kill the old man. But there *was* some crooked business there, I'm dead sure."

"You are getting me quite interested in this affair," said the stranger. "Any objection to telling me confidentially what you've got?"

Bill cast a sidelong glance at the stranger. His eyes narrowed, and a look of caution came over his face.

"Nothin' doin' on that line, mister. I ain't agoin' to tell nobody."

"But suppose I should turn out to be a regular detective, and give away what you've already told me?" suggested the lumberman.

"I should just say you'd lied, and put it up to you to get the evidence. Got any yet? Know where to go to get it?" Bill challenged.

The stranger laughed good-naturedly. "No, of course not, but seriously, Mr.—I forget what you said your name was?"

"Hawkins. Bill Hawkins. You can call me Bill. Most folks does."

"Well, then, Bill, let me give you some advice. Those detectives, as you say, will never let up until they get what they're after. If you are

innocent, you need a lawyer who knows all you know, and who will be in ahead of those fellows and have your end all fixed before they even get on your trail. They'll surely get you. More men are sent to the chair on circumstantial evidence than on the testimony of eyewitnesses, you know that as well as I do. The fact that you know something that you are concealing looks as though you had a motive for not coughing it up, and what other motive could you have than to protect yourself? And why protect yourself if you are innocent—unless you are protecting some one else?" he added sharply, again fixing on Bill those disturbing eyes which Bill instinctively felt were more accustomed to appraise men than lumber.

"No, I ain't protectin' the guilty party," said Bill unflinchingly. "I don't know who he is; but there was somebody besides the old man up there that night—and it wasn't me."

"Well, all I have to say is, I'd hate to be in your shoes," said the lumberman. "Of course you're a stranger to me and I don't know why I should care whether you swing for it, or another man. But I never knew a man before—that is to say really talked to a man, and sat beside him like I'm sitting beside you now, that was executed. It isn't in my line. I suppose chaplains and prison wardens and all those fellows get used to it, but I'm not hardened to it." He shook his head solemnly. "I'm dead sure when I read in

my morning paper a few months from now 'Bill Hawkins paid the penalty of his crime at 1.08 this morning protesting his innocence to the last,' I can't read it without feeling strange. You see, having known you, got real well acquainted and friendly as it were, confidential even like when we swapped confessions about lying a little in our business, it'll make me picture the whole scene—the death cell where you waited for the summons, the last call and all the trappings of the electric chair—the first voltage maybe not doing its work—only making you twitch—”

“Good God, man! Stow it,” shouted Bill, the cold sweat breaking out on his body.

“Oh, excuse me,” apologized the stranger, effusively. “I didn't mean to upset your nerves. I thought a man with the nerve you have wouldn't mind hearing such a common story as that. It happens every day.”

“It don't happen to *me* every day,” said Bill.

“Well, it's going to happen to you now, you mark my words and remember them, too, when they are hitching the straps on you in your last hour—if you don't do something *right now*, to save yourself.”

Bill stared straight ahead without speaking, and the stranger did not interrupt his thoughts. Occasionally his lips would tighten and a negative shake of the head indicate that he was rejecting



the thought which presented itself. Finally he spoke:

“I can’t make up my mind to tell anything to the police or any kind of a detective. They’d sure send me to the chair, and I got a fightin’ chance by keeping still.”

“Not a ghost of a chance,” affirmed the lumberman. “Remember Sherlock Holmes. You’ve left some clew by which they’ll trace you. Engage a lawyer, tell him all you know, and he’ll do the rest. You’re lost if you don’t, I swear it.”

Bill brightened at some recollection.

“Them criminal lawyers, I guess, are sharp enough for them smart detectives. I dunno—if I knew one I could trust—I dunno but I would take a chance on it.”

“That’s your best bet,” said the stranger heartily, “and you want to take the first train out. I’m taking that train myself. I’ll give you the name of the best criminal lawyer in the city. You can see him to-night.”

Bill’s inhibitions presented themselves again.

“But they’ll arrest me, sure, if I try to leave. It’ll look like I’m running away.”

“We’ll fix that all right,” said the stranger.

And they did, with the result that just as the afternoon train was pulling out of the station Bill’s taxi dashed madly up, and his fare sprang towards the train, Bill following on the run with



the grip. They both swung on to the steps, and the train glided out of sight before the group collected about the station realized that Bill had been accidentally carried away.

## CHAPTER XXII

### BILL RELIEVES HIS MIND

**N**EEDEDLESS to say, the lawyer chosen for Bill by the friendly stranger was Thornton. By the time they reached the city the stranger had ingratiated himself to such an extent that Bill allowed himself to be conducted to the office by him, Bill, however, shrewdly insisting that they look up the record of the firm before he parted with his knowledge. Finding it perfectly satisfactory, he bade good-by to his companion in the corridor of the office building, and took the first elevator up. It was only when the elevator had started that he remembered that he had not asked the friendly stranger his name, an oversight which he regretted, for he would like to continue their friendly relations.

The stranger, however, was not far away. He waited a moment only, and then took another elevator to the same floor.

Bill liked the lawyer at once. No gol-darned airs about him. "Why, it was just as easy to talk to him as 'twas to home folks," he declared afterwards.

And, indeed, he talked to such purpose that his erstwhile traveling companion, listening in on an

instrument in an adjoining room, slapped his knee frequently to express his joyful satisfaction.

Mr. Thornton encouraged Bill to begin at the time the old man left the train, and tell in minute detail every event from that time until the end. From time to time, an office boy entered the room with a note, which Thornton opened and read casually and then tore into bits and threw into the waste basket. The man in the adjoining room presently heard Bill answering the question which had been in the note.

“No, he was not what you’d call feeble,” he replied once after the note had been so dispatched. “Not feeble as you’d think. That is, he stepped briskly along the platform and he got out of the taxi at Globe Hollow quicker’n I could. He was just loony, that’s all. Asked me if I had a bothersome niece—and then there was all that money,” continued Bill, lowering his voice.

“Ah, yes, it was the money that drew suspicion on you, wasn’t it?” said Thornton. “How much do you think he had? The newspapers always exaggerate. They said he had ten thousand dollars, but that isn’t probable, although he did draw a ten thousand dollar check payable to himself that day.”

Bill shifted his position a bit and cleared his throat.

“Well, probable or not, that’s just what he did have,” he said.

“How do you know that?”

“That’s what I’ve traveled down here to tell you about,” said Bill. He looked cautiously about the room, and lowered his voice. “I know—’cause I’ve got it.”

“You!” exclaimed Thornton, startled out of his calm by this unexpected statement, while the man at the instrument forgot in his surprise to slap his knee.

“Ye-ah. *I* got it,” reaffirmed Bill. “That’s what’s troublin’ me. If I had minded my own darn business, and not tried to play the Good Samaritan or something like that,” Bill was a little confused about the Good Samaritan, but he connected it with stopping to meddle with something which was none of his darn business, “why, then, I’d been all right.”

“And *you* have the money,” repeated Thornton, “no wonder you were scared. Now, how are you going to account for having possession of it?”

“I ain’t agoing to account for it, that’s why I come to you. I’ll tell you how I got it, and you’ve got to put up the story to account for it,” said Bill eagerly.

“Well, go on. How *did* you get it?”

“It’s this way,” began Bill. “After I got home that night I kept thinking about the nutty old fellow, and I felt kinda mean about leavin’ him up there. The fellows at the station bet me



that nobody would ride in my new bus, and they'd have the laugh on me if I brought him back; so I left him up there at Globe Hollow just on the edge of night. But I felt mean about it, I did. So 'bout 12 o'clock I just got my taxi out and sneaked out."

"You sneaked out? Why did you *sneak* out?"

"So the fellows wouldn't have the laugh on me," said Bill honestly.

"Well, go on. You went to Globe Hollow?"

"I did. And when I got there, the shack was burned down. The flames was kinda shootin' up now and then, and I could see what had happened. The old man had gone in there and built a fire and fell asleep. It was all over. There was nothing for me to do but go back and tell the coroner. I was just turning away from the sickenin' sight when my eye caught something shining on the ground. I stooped over and picked it up and it was a fancy match case. Now, what was the match case doin' away off there? Then I looked a little closer, and there on the ground I found the roll of money. It looked as though they had dropped out of his pocket when he was undressing. But what in thunder did he undress for to sleep in that place? And if he lost his match box when he undressed, how could he light his fire away over in the shack? 'By the Jumpin' Frogs,' I said, 'somebody's been here besides the old

man.' Then I went over and looked at the shack again. The iron framework of the trunk was red hot and all twisted; and lyin' right inside that framework as it seemed to me was the bones of the old man. Now, how in thunder could that happen?''

“How did the coroner's jury account for it?” he asked.

“Somebody must have poked around there before they come, for they never seemed to notice it. Just took for granted the old man had built a fire and set fire to hisself and that was the verdict they brought in.”

“And you didn't offer any testimony contrary to that at the time?”

“Sure, I didn't,” said Bill. “They didn't ask me, and 'twasn't my funeral. It's easy enough to see what you ought to have done when it's too late,” he continued. “Now, if I'd 'a' left the money there, and gone down to the village and give the alarm, why, 'twould have been all right; but who'd ever believe I found a roll of ten thousand dollars right out in the open? I thought I better take it with me, and then on the way I gotta thinkin' what a fishy story that sounded an' then I began gettin' scared they'd think I killed the old man and that maybe they'd think there was more money an' I'd give this much up to cover up the rest; an' I says to myself, ‘Bill, you just naturally keep out of it, if you can.’”

“And where is the money now?” asked Thornton.

“I got it buried and I wish to hell it would rot,” said Bill, fervently. “I’m scared the wind’ll blow the tree up by the roots—a specially ordained hurricane just for the purpose of showing up my damn poor judgment; or a woodchuck’ll dig a hole there, or in some blamed way that money turn up. I ain’t had a grease-cup full of luck sence I bought that taxi.”

“What has your taxi got to do with it?”

“Well, I ain’t sayin’, but if I hadn’t done a little sharp dealin’ in the horse tradin’ I never would have had the taxi. I’m done being crooked, I am. Lord, if this is the way crooks put in their off time I don’t envy ’em.”

Bill could sit still no longer. He rose and shook himself.

The office boy entered with another scrap of paper. Thornton opened it and after reading said:

“Did you bury the match-safe with the money?”

“No, I got that in my pocket.”

He thrust his big hand into his trousers pocket and drew forth a jeweled case of foreign workmanship.

“Better leave it with me,” said Thornton, scrutinizing it carefully.



“Take it and welcome,” said Bill. “I wish you had the money too.”

“No, you let the money stay where it is. On *no* account go near it. If you are suspected you are probably watched. Don’t touch it until you get a word from me. And now I want to introduce you to a friend of mine, a man in whom I have the utmost confidence, who will look after your interests in this case and be the best friend you ever had.”

The door swung open, and Capwell entered.

Bill stood confounded; but before he could give expression to his feelings the lumberman was slapping him on the shoulder and shaking hands heartily, at the same time laughing at the discomfited cabman.

“It’s all in the day’s work, Bill. You’ll thank me for playing this trick on you some day; for there ain’t going to be no electric chair for you, nor any big head lines about ‘protesting your innocence to the last.’ We’ll get the drop on the right man now, and thanks to you, Bill, thanks to you.”

Bill’s confidence was restored by the renewed slapping on the shoulder and they left the lawyer’s office arm in arm.



## CHAPTER XXIII

### OLD JASPER'S BEDROOM

“**T**O-DAY is Friday, Ann,” said Dennis, emerging from the pantry with his usual Friday morning tray of silver. “Have you polished the Queen Anne silver tanker yet?”

“Have I polished the Queen Anne silver tanker yet, says you, Dennis Mahoney. Sure, ’tis a parrot you might as well be, and done with it. Ten years and more have I been livin’ with you, and never a Friday morning have you missed sayin’, ‘Have you polished the Queen Anne silver tanker yet?’ Moreover, what’s the good of polishin’ the silver at all when there’s nobody to use it?” replied Ann.

“That’s true for you,” said Dennis, depositing the tray on the kitchen table. “ ’Twas a pleasure to polish it for Miss Eleanor, though there was little enough on it at any time, I’m bound to say. I wonder when will Mr. Charles come here to live entirely.”

“May the divil fly away with him before ever he comes here to live in the place of Miss Eleanor,” said Ann warmly.

“I’ll say Amen to that right enough,” said Dennis heartily. “My God, there’s the doorbell,”

he ejaculated, dropping the spoons with a start.

“Get your coat on you, man, and compose your countenance! Can’t a visitor ring the doorbell without you jumpin’ as though you’d heard the Banshee?” In truth Ann was as startled as Dennis, but she was quicker to regain her composure.

Dennis opened the door to a man wearing the uniform of the Salvation Army who inquired for Mr. Bowen—Mr. Jasper Bowen.

“I’m sorry to inform you, sir,” said Dennis, “that Mr. Jasper Bowen is dead entirely.”

The visitor manifested surprise at this. He had hoped to get a contribution from him for the Salvation Army. Perhaps some other member of the family would see him.

“There’s no one here at present,” explained Dennis. “The heir has not yet taken up his residence here.”

“Will he be likely to be here this morning?” urged the visitor. “I could come in and wait.”

“He’s not likely to be in,” said Dennis firmly. “He gave me orders not to let any one in until he came himself.”

“Are you sure he will not be here this morning?” persisted the visitor.

“I’m sure you’d have a long wait, sir, for he seldom comes now, and never in the morning,” explained Dennis.

The visitor glanced swiftly up and down the street and then back at Dennis.

"Let me in, Dennis. I have a message from Miss Eleanor," he said in a low tone.

He had pronounced the Open Sesame. The door swung wide, Dennis slipped back and the stranger entered.

"Who is in the house now?" he asked quickly.

"Nobody, sir, but Ann and myself," said Dennis.

"Good," said the stranger. He drew from his pocket an unsealed letter which he handed to Dennis.

"Here is a letter from Miss Eleanor asking you to follow my directions. Now, I want you to let me examine the room Mr. Jasper Bowen last occupied."

"I have no key, sir," said Dennis, holding the letter reverently in his hands. "Mr. Bowen took it with him. 'Twas a new-fangled lock he had put on and the pass key won't open it."

"When did he have it put on? After Mr. Charles came?" queried the visitor.

"Yes, sir. It was indeed," admitted Dennis.

"Well, let us not waste any time. You show me the room and you and Ann can read your letter afterward. I can open the door without a pass key."

"Beggin' your pardon, sir. I must ask Ann first."

"All right," laughed the stranger, "only be quick about it."



Dennis soon returned with Ann's enthusiastic consent. Miss Eleanor wished it. Ergo, let it be done.

Dennis viewed with wonder the dexterity with which his visitor opened the lock, "Just like a crook," he thought. "But sure them Salvation Army men are all ex-crooks, I've been told, and this one's not long been reformed, I'm thinkin', or he wouldn't be so expert."

The door swung open, and together they entered the room lately occupied by the master of the house. The stranger gave a sweeping glance around and then began a detailed examination of the room. The bed was unmade, the bedclothes thrown carelessly over the footboard and trailing on the floor. The stranger tried a closet door.

"Locked," he said. "Why did he keep it locked?"

"He didn't," said Dennis in surprise.

"But it is locked now and with one of your new-fangled locks," said the disguised Capwell, his swift fingers already manipulating the keys which he had brought with him.

"There we are," he said as the bolt flew back. "Now, let's see what we have here; clothes to go away with, eh?"

"No, sir," said Dennis, bewildered. "He hadn't time to get new clothes. These same are all the clothes he had at all."



“Why didn’t you put them in his trunk then?” said the visitor.

“I didn’t pack his trunk, sir. Mr. Charles did that—and what Mr. Jasper would have said when he found out this flesh brush was left out I can’t say, sir. He always had it in his hand.” Dennis had turned, and with the brush in his hand walked to the dressing table. “And, oh, wurra, Mr. Charles! Wouldn’t he have disinherited you on the spot when he found this hair brush missin’? Sorra another brush would he let me use on him, sir—and this comb—they’re what you use for babies. His hair was that thin and his scalp so tender. Glory be,” he exclaimed as he continued his examination, “he’s not put in *any-thing* for the poor old man to use.”

He pulled open bureau drawers.

“Oh, ’tis well for you, then, Mr. Charles, that your uncle never lived to find out the way you treated him. There’s never a shirt gone, sir, nor a sock.” He pulled open drawer after drawer. “’Tis little enough the old man had, sir, and that badly worn itself; but such as it is, ’tis all here—not a thing gone—not even a handkerchief itself. Oh, Mr. Charles, Mr. Charles, what was you thinkin’ of to treat the poor old man like that? Why, he couldn’t have had a thing but what he wore. Here’s even his slippers and his dressing gown.”

Dennis was passing about the room, more and

more distressed with each new discovery of an omission in the packing. After one final comprehensive survey he burst forth:

“What in God’s name was in the trunk, then, sir? Sure, there’s not a single thing missin’—not a slither of anything.”

“Sure there’s nothing missing from the room?” inquired the visitor. “Look sharp and see if there’s not something missing.”

Dennis looked about.

“Not a thing,” he said. “There’s nothing missin’ but himself and the grouch he had on him of late—God forgive me for speakin’ like that of the poor old man who’s dead and gone to glory—God rest his soul.”

Capwell was standing by the unmade bed, his eyes resting on the trailing bedclothes.

“Was the old man in the habit of having only one sheet on his bed?” he asked.

“Sure he had two sheets,” said Dennis, approaching the bed, “and good linen ones at that.” He began to remove the bedclothes, continuing until the bed was stripped. Then he replaced them one by one, but he could find only one sheet.

“Sure Mr. Charles must have been daft when he packed the trunk. What could he be wantin’ with a sheet I’d like to know?”

“Then so far as you know there could have been nothing else from this room placed in the trunk?” asked Capwell.

"I'd swear it, sir. I know everything the old man had, and it is all here, every stick, stone and hair of it. Even his hat and coat for that matter, for the queer-looking cape and hat he wore away Mr. Charles bought for him at the last minute. He insisted on having them, Mr. Charles said."

"H'm, I think I understand," said the visitor with evident satisfaction. "I quite understand," he repeated.

"Well, if you do you have one on me," muttered Dennis.

"Now, then," questioned Capwell, "what happened the morning he made his will?"

Dennis, aided by frequent promptings, related the occurrences of the morning. When he came to the point of Charles' entrance and their visit to old Jasper's room, Capwell's interruptions grew more frequent. He often made Dennis repeat his statements several times.

"Did you enter the room at all that morning?" he asked.

"No, sir, not to say enter," replied Dennis. "I went up and stood without in the hall, while Mr. Charles went in."

"But you said the old man spoke to you," reminded Capwell.

"So he did, sir. He threatened to break every bone in my body—and I thinkin' he hadn't the strength to break a match—if I came near him before I was sent for."



“Are you sure that *was* after he went back to his room?”

“Sure it was, sir, and before too, for that matter, while he was draggin’ his poor old body up the stairs.”

“Just how did he look when he said it the last time, and whereabouts in the room was he?”

Dennis gently scratched his ear and considered.

“I can’t rightly say I saw him—not to say I really *saw* him, because Mr. Charles was blocking up the doorway between us.”

Capwell’s eye lighted with satisfaction at this statement.

“Couldn’t you see into the room enough to tell whether he was sitting up or lying down?” he asked eagerly.

Dennis resorted to the ear again and again considered.

“Come to think of it, sir, I could not see into the room. Mr. Charles was standing like this”—he placed the door ajar—“and beyond there just a little to the left—if you don’t mind stepping into the hall I’ll show you the exact way of it.”

Capwell promptly went into the hall, and Dennis reconstructed the tableau showing the relative positions of himself and Charles on the morning in question. Capwell was satisfied that it would be a physical impossibility for Dennis to see any person inside the room.



“Now, then, did you hear any voices inside after the door was closed?” he asked eagerly.

“Well, yes, sir. I’m free to say I did hear voices, for I didn’t go directly downstairs. I went and closed the window beyond in the hall; and when I passed the door on my way down I heard them talking.”

“Who was talking?”

“The both of them were talking. First I heard Mr. Charles saying something in the funny way he has with him, although I couldn’t hear what he was talking about; and then I heard the old man say something and then he laughed. You couldn’t mistake that laugh, sir,” Dennis affirmed feelingly. “No, sir.”

“And then, again, you might,” said Capwell slowly. “Did you ever hear of ventriloquism, Dennis?”

## CHAPTER XXIV

### THE JEWELLED MATCH-BOX

HAVING learned from Dennis all the details of the acute and nearly fatal attack of the old man on the day preceding the making of the will, and convinced himself that Dennis had never seen uncle and nephew together after that event, Capwell demanded to be shown the room where the will was made.

“He was sitting yonder at that desk when I came in,” said Dennis. “The room so dark itself I could hardly see him.”

“What made it dark?” said Capwell. “Hadn’t you drawn the shades that morning?”

“Come to think of it, I believe I had,” said Dennis. “Now that you remind me of it. Queer thing for him to make the room dark when he wanted to be readin’ something. Well, sir, if you’ll believe me, one thing was as quare as another them days. You can’t be pickin’ out any one thing and sayin’, ‘This was quarer nor that.’ They was all quare alike, and that I do be tellin’ you.”

“Tell me some more queer things,” urged Capwell.

“Well, you know how it was dyin’ he was the day before, and Mr. Charles that scared he was

dyin' on his hands that he looked like a corpse himself, and the doctor sayin' he could never survive another attack and he likely to have that same soon; and then he ups and comes downstairs all by himself, and he talkin' about the fountain of youth and all that; and he makin' his will and he near to takin' the head off the lawyer when he came nigh him with the paper to sign; and he motionin' him back and makin' me bring the paper—"

"What's that about the paper? He wouldn't let the lawyer come near him?" interrupted Capwell.

"Sorry a bit nearer than this," Dennis indicated their positions, "and he wouldn't let me watch him when he was signin' his name, though I could scarce keep from going to him for fear he'd fall off his chair itself, and he that sick only the day before I had to feed him with a spoon."

"And then you say he wouldn't let you help him upstairs, but went all by himself? But you saw him when you served his lunch. How did he seem then?"

"That's another quare thing, sir. He ate a hearty lunch, though he wasn't able to take more than a child the day before."

"Did he seem like himself? Talk much?"

"He talked—yes—but—"

"But what?"

"I can't tell you how it was, sir, but I had a

quare feelin' that 'twasn't himself at all. 'Twas like I was dreamin' it was; and I hope you'll not think shame of me, sir, if I tell you I haven't waked up since."

"You'll wake up soon, Dennis. Quite soon," Capwell averred confidently. "Now, where was the trunk all this time?"

"I brought it down and left it in the hall outside his door, but Mr. Charles must have brought it into the room and packed it—though what he put in it is past me to tell."

"Did you carry it downstairs?"

"I did that."

"And you put it on the taxicab?"

"I did."

"Was it heavy?"

"Fairly so, sir."

"That is, you don't think it was an empty trunk?"

"Sure it wasn't an empty trunk. Didn't I bring it down empty from the storeroom just the evenin' before?"

"You think it was a hundred pounds heavier when you put it on the cab?"

"There's no doubt about that, sir, but, my God, what was in it, when there's nothin' missin' from his room that would weigh an ounce itself?"

"That's what we are going to find out. Now, can you give me some of the old man's handwriting? Something he's written recently?"



“ ’Tis not much writing he’s been doin’ of late. There may be some checks or something like that, but there’s not much writin’ itself on a check.”

“Enough for my purpose. Can we find some canceled checks? The very last ones he had.”

“Since Mr. Charles came I don’t remember to have seen them at all. But I have his name on an order he gave me a long time ago when Mr. Charles was not here. If that same would be doin’ you any good, you’re welcome to it.”

He produced a scrap of paper and Capwell scanned it carefully.

“All right, Dennis. I’ll keep this, just what I want. Now, you know Miss Eleanor doesn’t want Mr. Charles to know I have been here,” he cautioned.

“He’ll never know anything from my lips that Miss Eleanor, God bless her, wants unbeknown to him, and that she knows right well,” said Dennis fervently.

“So she does, Dennis, so she does,” Capwell assured him. “Now one thing more, Dennis. What did the old man smoke? Cigarettes? Cigars?”

“Sure he never smoked anything, sir, nor would he allow Mr. Charles to smoke in the house. That is if he knew it. Mr. Charles often lighted his cigarette in the house before he left it, and I must say he was most untidy with his matches—Ann’ll tell you that same.”

“Oh, he was untidy, was he? Threw his matches about, I suppose. You wouldn’t happen to have any of them, would you?”

“I would not. They was little matches in a kind of a case that had a head of a Turk or something on it. His turban or his crown or whatever you call the thing on the top of his head had diamonds and green stones in it. Many’s the time I saw it, sir. He told me once a Russian countess gave it to him.”

“Did it look anything like this, Dennis?”

“ ’Tis, indeed, the same, sir,” he said, taking it in his hand and examining carefully the object Capwell proffered him. “Yes, ’tis the same. I mind the dent in it. Mr. Charles told me a bullet struck him and it saved his life. And the matches inside had bright green heads on them onlike anything I ever saw before.” He touched a spring and the case flew open.

“Yes, sir, ’tis the same, the very same—the little green-headed divils he scattered on the rugs or anywhere—the very same.”

“All right, Dennis. I don’t believe you’ll see any more of them scattered about this house,” said Capwell, taking the case from him and replacing it in his pocket. “Now I’m going. Don’t let on to anybody that I’ve been here. Go and read your letter with Ann. I’ll tell Miss Eleanor you’ve treated me royally.”

## CHAPTER XXV

### THE THIRD DEGREE

CAPWELL left the house very well satisfied with himself. His next concern was to round up the man whom Charles had called Buggs and ascertain their precise relations. He was morally certain that he would appear as soon as Charles came into the inheritance, but he was eager to get on his trail before that if possible, and one evening chance favored him. The police had raided a pseudo-clothing store, and had collected along with several gallons of anti-Volstead a few choice specimens of the *genus homo*.

A telephone message from police headquarters advised Capwell that the man he wanted was among their number. On his arrival he had no difficulty in immediately recognizing one of the group, and that one flashed a sullen glance of recognition on Capwell.

"So you know me again, I see," said Capwell, the significance of his words and manner understood only by the captive.

The man addressed turned a livid green, while an expression of deadly fear lit up his eyes.

"Oh, you know Buggs, do you?" said the officer in some surprise, for Capwell had stated that he



was baffled in his search for that offender because he was unknown to him.

“Buggs?” repeated Capwell, his eye fastened on the cringing captive. “Oh, yes, *Buggs*. Yes, officer, Buggs and I have met before. We’d like a little quiet talk together if you’ll provide a room where we won’t be interrupted.”

The room being provided, Capwell prepared his man for the third degree by inspiring him with still more terror than he already manifested.

“So here’s where you are,” he began in a terrible voice. “You’ve been a pretty wary customer, but you’ve slipped a cog somewhere, for here we are at last—at last.” His fingers gripped tightly and he transfixed his terrified victim with a glare which he had practiced many hours for use on occasions like the present.

“Listen, boss,” said Buggs, “don’t be too hard on me till you know the whole story. I didn’t know what was in them dispatches, so help me God, till it was all over. They was given to me to take to the German camp to fool ’em with. The officer what gave ’em to me told me to go over the lines and let myself be captured with them dispatches on me, and to promise to give ’em a lot more information and they’d let me go free. And then he told me a lot more stuff to tell ’em which he said was to fool ’em and then they’d come over to take our trenches and when they got there they’d all be in a trap, and I would



be the hero of the Allies with promotion and medals and no end of money." He paused to see what impression he was making.

"Go on," said Capwell in a steely voice.

"It worked just as he said it would," Buggs continued. "I got over the lines and was captured and they brought me into a dugout where there was some Hun officers and they took the dispatches and read 'em and talked Dutch and laughed and hollered like mad; and then I guess they give an order for me to be turned loose because I had some beer and got away—but, my God, captain," he thrust a bent arm across his face.

"Well, what then?" said Capwell sternly, giving no evidence that he was utterly unprepared for this revelation.

"It didn't go off right," he sobbed. "That night the Huns came over in swarms, and—oh, my God!—I can see the boys now. Don't make me tell it, boss," he pleaded. "I've seen war—God! I guess I have. I was with the Canadians at Wipers—but the slaughter that night and the Hun flag wavin' over the place next morning—don't make me tell it, boss." He flung his coarse hands over his hardened face and shook like a poplar leaf in the wind.

Capwell was appalled. After awhile he asked more gently, for he was not untouched by the genuine emotion of the man:

“Did you know the man who sent you with the dispatches?”

“Yes, he was wearing the uniform of a British officer and I thought it was all right—then.”

“You say *then*! Did you ever see him at any other time?”

The man’s expression immediately changed. It became vindictive, crafty.

“I think I did,” he answered reservedly.

“You *think* you did. *Did* you?”

The man was silent.

“Oh, well,” Capwell spoke indifferently, “there probably wasn’t any other man. You would say that to save your own neck. *You* are the man who carried the plans of the salient to the enemy that night. *You* are the *spy*. *You* are guilty of the slaughter that night. *You!*”

Capwell had assumed his third degree manner again, and the terrified man quailed before it.

“No, boss, no! I swear it!” he cried, wringing his futile hands.

“Then *who* is the traitor?” Capwell demanded.

“I’ll tell you, boss, if you promise not to have me shot,” he whimpered, craftiness again showing through his terror.

“And if you don’t tell me, what then? You have a few other unsettled accounts, I understand. The theft of a diamond ring from Jasper Bowen’s house, for instance.”

"I never stole that ring; I swear it. I wasn't in Jasper Bowen's house that night."

"What were you doing skulking around there, then?"

"I was engaged as a private detective," he declared, for the first time looking Capwell squarely in the eye.

Capwell smiled ironically.

"Since when have you honored our profession with your accession to the ranks?" he said.

Buggs was silent.

"I asked you a question," Capwell thundered.

"Honest to God, boss, I was hired to watch that house that night," he whimpered.

"Who hired you?" demanded Capwell.

"The man who owns the house," replied Buggs after a moment's hesitation.

"And who owns the house?"

Capwell did not fail to note the expression of shifty evasion which accompanied the answer.

"Mr. Charles Bowen."

"And he gave you the ring for your services? A rather unusual way of paying a detective, isn't it?"

"We had some words—and I threatened him—and he gave me the ring."

"Ah—you threatened him? In other words, you blackmailed him?"

A fleeting look of terror crossed the crafty



face again. His shifty eyes sought Capwell's for a moment, and seeing nothing but grim determination there, he blurted forth angrily:

"He's a damn blackguard, he is, and he's got to go fifty-fifty on that Bowen money with me or I'll tell the world the old man died in his bed before ever the will was made, I will; and I'll tell who made up as the old man and made the will hisself, and then took the body in a trunk to Globe Hollow and burned it up so's the doctors couldn't examine it and find out he was dead before the will was made. Oh, I've got his number, boss," he continued in a sort of frenzy. "I can tell who was the ghost that tried to scare the servants away so the girl would be in his power. British officer! Send me with dispatches to the damn Boches, will he? And risk facing a firing squad. I'll see he don't get old miser Bowen's money without divvyng up with me, I will." His eyes had the look of a maniac in which craft and cunning alternated with malignity.

"But you're a spy, you know, Buggs," said Capwell, quick to take advantage of the fellow's mood. "You won't have any use for money. Bowen will be spending this money while you're rotting in a traitor's grave."

"Bowen? Bowen?" he shrieked. "Do you think that fellow's name is Bowen?" The unbalanced organism which served for the fellow's brain was as wax in Capwell's hands.



“Out with it then and save your own miserable life, you fool,” thundered Capwell.

On Buggs’s face flitted changing emotions. It was evident that he was in deadly fear for his own safety now that Capwell had found him; and in still more fear of the wrath of the seemingly powerful “Bowen.” Capwell, accustomed to reading faces, detected something more than fear. There was suspicion, doubt, distrust. Capwell suspected that he considered himself unfairly treated and that he was more than a little suspicious that Bowen meant to “do him” in this latest enterprise. The detective was quick to follow up this mood.

“Well, I’m waiting,” he said, “but I suppose that he has always been so square with you you hate to give him away.”

“Square with me? Hell! He’d give you good money, boss, to croak me. He’s tried to hissself more’n once; and I expect he’ll get me yet—unless I get him first.” His upper lip curled like that of an angry cur ready to spring.

Capwell followed up his opportunity.

“He’ll get you first all right. Don’t make any mistake about that,” he said in a tone of conviction. “All I need to do is to go and ask him to tell me all he knows about you, and he’ll tell it p, d, q, with all the frills on. And I don’t even need to hunt him up. As soon as he knows I’ve

nabbed you, he'll come running with bells on to give you away."

Buggs was standing where a shaft of light from a barred window high up in the outside wall fell across his face. Capwell, standing with one elbow resting on a high desk, observed the offender with his usual fine attention to details.

He was not a repulsive-looking man—at least Nature had not intended him for such: His unshaven face, his unwashed hands, his slinking manner and the hunted—half-defiant, half-angry—expression of his eyes were merely evidences of his ill-spent life. Not a predestined criminal, Capwell mentally registered. Bertillon measurements would not disclose him to be sub-normal in intelligence or marked with the hereditary signs of the criminal. The repellent features he possessed were acquired—were milestones marking the downward path. His language, too, was not the vocabulary of the gang. The vernacular he had, Capwell believed, had been picked up along his way. He interested Capwell.

"Am I right?" he questioned, as Buggs had failed to comment on his last statement.

"You're more'n right," Buggs admitted. "I know too much about that good-looking devil with his polite ways to make it safe for him to have me hanging around where he is playing up the Bowen stunt and not divvying up. And, boss, he

can't get away from me. At first he'd give me the slip by sending me to the other ends of the earth on a wild-goose chase; but I always caught up with him. I've trailed him all over God's earth, and no matter what disguise he has on, I've found him. And do you know how, boss? I've *smelled* him. You'd laugh to see him some time when he's talking to some swell guy, pretending to be an officer or something, suddenly lamp me, when he thought I was in Australia or somewhere. God! I've just rolled over and laughed till my belly ached."

"What would he do then? Give you money, I suppose?"

"You betcher life he gave me money—and a lot of it usually; and I'd swear solemn I'd never come back any more."

For the moment he was enjoying the memory of the discomfiture he had precipitated.

"And you broke your word each time, of course?" said Capwell.

"Sure thing!" asserted Buggs. "'Tain't breaking your word to fool that lyin' hypocrite."

He turned and spat toward the somewhat distant cuspidor with such dexterity that the shot hit the exact center of the bull's-eye.

"And now what I'm trying to get him to do," he continued, "is to split fifty-fifty on this Bowen deal, and then I'll settle down and be a honest citizen the rest of my life. I'm fed up on chasin'



him around, eating my breakfast in France, and my dinner in Germany and my supper in some dog-gone country where they talk like monkeys, and where a hatful of swag don't get you a ham sandwich."

"Has he agreed to split fifty-fifty?" asked Capwell.

"Hell, yes! He'd promise anything. I ain't got nothin' on him in the promisin' line. Only he is so damn slippery. I see signs that he means to light out again just as soon as he gets the money in his hands, and what I'm afraid of is that I got to get on his trail again. 'Tain't so easy for me to travel just now as 'tis for him, for he'll have all the money and I'll have to tramp."

"But if he gets away and you have to serve a term in prison, he'll have the laugh on you in the end. I'm afraid your wits won't match his, Buggs. He's got the drop on you because we know you, and you won't tell us who he is," Capwell baited.

"I dunno but I just as soon tell you who he is, and it won't do you much good at that," said Buggs.

"Well, who is he?" urged Capwell.

Buggs aimed again successfully at the cuspidor.

"Can I set down, boss?" he asked, casting a speculative eye over the two or three uncompromising-looking chairs the room afforded. "The



beefsteak, and hash brown potatoes, and mince pie, and doughnuts and coffee in this hotel this morning sets a little heavy on my stomach. Too much cream in the coffee don't agree with me."

Capwell was amused at the evasion.

"Sure you can sit down," he said cordially. "Sorry you overate this morning. You better go a little slow on that hearty food at first, because several years of that kind of living will make you gouty."

Buggs looked up quickly. "Whatch—ye—mean—several years?"

"Why, just this. You and Bowen are conspirators and forgers, and thieves. If we can nab Bowen on this deal, it may let you out as you say you've had no money yet."

"Bowen, eh? Didn't I tell you his name wasn't Bowen?" Buggs asked contemptuously.

"You did," asserted Capwell in a threatening tone, "and I'm going to give you just one minute to tell me his real name." He drew his watch from his pocket and held it significantly in his hand.

"Well, as I told you before, his real name won't do you much good because he never done much harm when his name was just Frederick Kleberg. He was just a nice boy when he lived over in Brooklyn and went to school at old Number 17. Too nice he was. Always wore a necktie and polished his shoes, and wore a ring." Buggs

checked off these absurdities with an amused chuckle. "Guess he never knew who his father was," he continued. "Folks say he was an actor. As a boy he could take off anybody—their walk, their talk, and their very looks. And he was a ventriloquist, too. Used to pull off lots of funny stunts."

"Popular with the boys, then, I suppose," said Capwell.

"Never," promptly averred Buggs. "They took notice of his stunts, but they never mixed with him. There was something different from the rest of us about him, and he wasn't a mixer himself."

"What became of him?"

"He joined a vaudeville troupe under another name. He called himself Harry Peale, and then Harry Peale got arrested for forgery, and about that time I ran into him, and got arrested myself for coverin' him. And you know we both served sentences in Atlanta Federal prison, and lots more you don't know. As for his names, he has a different moniker in every place, but his first one was Frederick Kleberg."

"Peale? Harry Peale? So he is that bird, is he? Well, Buggs, all right. You have given me something to think of, and I'll drop around and see you to-morrow morning just after you've finished that beefsteak."

## CHAPTER XXVI

### OUTWITTED

“**E**VERYTHING going fine,” said Capwell to the officer in charge when he emerged from the room where he had held his interview with Buggs. “Isolate Buggs. Don’t let any one get into communication with him in any way until you hear from me again.”

It was raining hard when he emerged into the street. Pedestrians had muffled their ears in up-turned collars and were plunging forward with hats pulled down and heads bent to the driving sheets of water. But Capwell was oblivious to the elements. Elated with his success, he entered his waiting taxi, and drove swiftly to Thornton’s office, where he gave vent to his extreme satisfaction with the progress of events.

“Good work!” exclaimed Thornton. “You’re sure you have Bowen well guarded?” he cautioned. “A man that can assume as many personalities as he can and elude the most skillful agents in Europe isn’t going to fall into any ordinary trap. Your men must have their full five senses on guard every second or he’ll give them the slip yet.”



“A flea couldn’t get through the net I have woven around him,” said Capwell confidently. “You may be sure I haven’t been trailing that fellow for three years to let him slip from my grasp now.”

“I’m sure of it,” assented Thornton, “nevertheless, I shall feel better when you assure me the handcuffs are on him.”

“I won’t keep you waiting another day,” laughed Capwell, his keen satisfaction in the near termination of his long quest glowing in his eyes.

He borrowed a raincoat from the lawyer and went out into the storm, ducking his head to windward as he emerged to the street to enter his taxi. He gave the driver the name of the white marble structure in which Charles Bowen had his luxurious apartment. He had no need to hurry. He was rather inclined to prolong the exquisite sense of satisfaction he felt in the performance of these last delectable details. Nothing could go wrong now. He was the man who could produce the internationally famous criminal. He hadn’t studied the intricacies of the foreign Secret Service all these years for nothing. Charles Bowen could not make the slightest move in his apartment or elsewhere that was not immediately transmitted to Capwell’s headquarters. The telephone, the telegraph, the mails were subsidized. The hall boy, the janitor and even Bowen’s valet were in Capwell’s pay. “It’s all over but the



shouting," quoted Capwell to himself as he bowled along through the traffic.

He made no attempt to disguise his person as he approached the apartment. There was no need of subterfuge. There might be a fight, but escape was impossible.

"Bowen in?" he asked the uniformed hall boy.

"Yes, sir," replied that functionary.

"His valet with him?"

"No, sir, he left the house an hour and a half ago."

"He was followed, of course," Capwell asked quickly, "by the usual two men?"

"Oh, yes, sir, and the report came back he went to Jasper Bowen's residence and he hadn't left it ten minutes ago."

"Good. Call in Devery and Horrowitz. Notify Burns on the beat. Have the car at the door in five minutes."

"Yes, sir."

Capwell, Devery and Horrowitz took the elevator, and on the third floor they stepped from it onto the thick crimson carpet of the corridor. At the second door to the left they touched a button and heard the tinkle of the bell within. Getting no response, they rang again—and yet again.

Capwell looked sharply at his two subordinates.

"You're sure he didn't go out?"

"Sure, sir. A fly couldn't get out of this apartment without being seen," said Devery positively.

“The fire escape opens into a court, and there is a man night and day on the outlook there.”

Capwell tried the door. It was locked. He rang once again. Getting no response, he looked through the keyhole.

“The door must have been locked from the outside,” he said, a note of anxiety creeping into his voice. “There is no key inside.”

From his pocket he took a bunch of skeleton keys and, his hand trembling a bit in spite of himself, fitted one into the lock. The bolt flew back, and the three men, revolvers in hand, burst through the swiftly opened door.

Here an amazing situation confronted them. In the center of the room, facing the door, sat a figure in the grotesque garments of a clown, his pointed hat falling limply askew, his arms bound and the bandage with which he was gagged failing to hide the grotesque grin painted on the cloth which covered his face. In his bound hands he held a large blue envelope.

All three officers of the law leveled their pistols and cautiously approached the sitting figure. Capwell had thought himself prepared for any subtle trick of the arch impersonator, but this was “a new one on him” he admitted.

“Keep him covered,” he ordered, while he himself carefully inspected the disguise. He cut the knot of the pocket handkerchief used for a gag, snatched the covering from the face, and fell

back astounded. The pseudo valet, Detective Connors, glared at them from indignant eyes.

“Where’s Bowen?” demanded Capwell.

“Gone an hour ago,” said Connors. “Cut these damned bandages. I’ve lost the use of my limbs.”

When freed he stretched his cramped muscles and explained that while he had been engaged in his usual occupations that morning a voice behind him peremptorily ordered:

“Hands up!”

He turned and looked into the barrel of a leveled revolver held in the hand of Bowen, who pleasantly and politely invited him to remove his clothing and substitute the clown’s costume. This accomplished, he had to submit to be bound and gagged. Connors described his captor as lightning in his movements and his fingers like tempered steel. He completed his disguise by donning Connors’ storm coat and hat. He then imitated perfectly the slightly peculiar gait and manner of Connors and startled that individual by an exact reproduction of his voice. He satirically apologized for the inconvenience he was causing so faithful and trustworthy a servant and begged him to express his regrets to Capwell for not being able to wait for his arrival.

Capwell flushed.

“An hour and a half start,” he muttered.



“Well, any way, on to Bowen’s house,” he ordered.

The two detectives were on guard when they arrived, and Capwell breathed more freely. Connors, they reported, had arrived and had not left the house.

They got no response to their ring, but the door yielded readily to their touch, and five men entered. All was quiet. They distributed themselves according to Capwell’s directions and began a cautious and guarded search.

Capwell, with Horrowitz, was searching the library when Devery called them to the kitchen. There sat Dennis and Ann, bound and gagged, Dennis wearing the valet’s clothing which was far from meeting the needs of his more corpulent body.

Capwell’s heart missed a beat, while the eyes of Daly, one of the detectives detailed to watch the house, nearly burst their sockets with surprise.

“Dennis!” he ejaculated. “How in the name of the devil did you get back into the house without my seeing you?”

Dennis could only glare in reply, but when he was released and the question repeated he replied petulantly:

“How could you be after seein’ me come in when I haven’t been out the livelong day?”



Daly's jaw dropped.

"You're a damn liar, then. You spoke to me when you went out at your usual time at half past one o'clock."

"I did not speak to you then, nor at any other time," declared Dennis. "It was Mr. Charles Bowen that spoke to you, and him lookin' like the spit and image of myself. He's a great joker, he is, and I don't relish livin' out my five years with him at all—bad luck to him," he added, ruefully regarding his absurd appearance.

Ann had by this time been released. "Five years, is it?" she indignantly exclaimed. "No, and not five minutes, and me a married woman this ten years and well-behaved and dacint to have to see a man undress to his underclothes before my face and eyes and make my husband, Dennis, that is, change clothes with him for a lark. It's too old we are for such pranks, and I'll never get the use of my arms again, tied up this way for many hours, and the last word he sayin' to us in his laughin' way: 'Dennis,' he says, 'I can't be thankful enough to you for your blue eyes,' and he puttin' on some kind of stuff that made him the color of Dennis, and he puffin' out his cheeks above the collar of Dennis's old raincoat, and settin' Dennis's hat a bit on one side of his head for all the world like himself will do in spite of me tellin' him he looks rakish that way. And even the basket on his arm

itself, he carried it like himself. I don't like such pranks, so I don't. I declare to my God, I'll leave the house this day, so I will."

Capwell saw it all. There was no need to search the house further. His quarry had escaped. He squared his jaw determinedly, gave some further directions to his men, and left alone in his waiting taxicab.

## CHAPTER XXVII

### MORE THAN ONE WAY

**A** COLD, depressing rain was beating spasmodically against the window panes, tempering the familiar roar of Forty-second Street and intensifying the gloom in Capwell's private office—a quite unnecessary waste of energy on the part of Nature. Capwell needed no external aids to complete the sense of depression following the utter defeat of his cherished enterprise.

He sat at his desk; at his elbow a bunch of unnoticed official papers, weighted with the futile automatic pistol whose last act had placed him in the rôle of comedian. The hand upon which his forehead rested partially concealed the gray and haggard features. All the airy optimism which he had displayed in Thornton's office had given place to bitter self-condemnation. He had overreached himself in his attempt to gather all the various threads of his quarry's past into his hands. Why had he not secured him when he was sure of his prey? Why had he been so obsessed with the determination to add the crime of murder to the sum of his other crimes? If only he had used better judgment when he had had the

villain in his power. His pride was sore stricken, and he wallowed in the depths of humiliation. He dropped his hand to the desk in an unconscious gesture of despair. In falling it rested on the blue typewritten letter which had been found in the bound hands of Conners in the Vanderbilt apartment.

At sight of it, Capwell's eyes glowed with sudden anger. He had already read it, but he picked it up and read again:

“MY DEAR CAPWELL: I appreciate the zeal and persistency you have shown in attempting to bind our love with bonds of steel; but I have given you so many opportunities that you have failed to avail yourself of, that were I not a supreme optimist I should become discouraged and drop you from number One on my list of dangerous foes, and place you at the bottom of the list.

“Why, Capwell, you are almost the first sleuth I knew in what you call my criminal career. I didn't think then you would make the great name for yourself that you have, because you did a very indiscreet thing on that occasion. You accepted a cigarette from a stranger. It grieves me even yet to remember that it was narcotized, and that the post-office inspector who induced you to show him some finger-print evidence obtained from a bottle of explosive used in an affair that shall be nameless, walked off with his own finger-prints. Surely you see you were putting a premium on crime to let a novice discover how easy it is to put it over on a detective.



“I had many interviews with you after that, and I saw that you were really coming on. On the occasion when you were looking for a man who had been impersonating a naval officer and I dined with you at the Ritz and assisted you to collect some false evidence, you were very amusing, Capwell. I remember how puffed up you were when you placed your host’s card in your breast pocket—Commander Stanley Richardson, U. S. N. But I was grieved at your ingratitude soon thereafter when I discovered that you were looking for your distinguished host.

“I must hand it to you, though, old sleuth, for the chase you gave me overseas. If it is any satisfaction to you, let me assure you that if you hadn’t been so close on my heels when I visited the Escadrille de Volontaires, where I met Charles Bowen and discovered our remarkable resemblance, I should now be wallowing in respectability. Horrible fate!

“Don’t give up looking for me. By so doing you will take away my keenest zest in life. I shall be in Toronto next Monday. Look for me there—but you won’t find me. Indeed, I predict that you never will find

“THE NIMBLE DODGER.”

Slowly, methodically, he perused the insolent message, and placed it back on the desk. Then he raised a clenched fist and brought it down with terrific force on the inanimate paper.

Suddenly he seemed to cast off the despair which had enveloped him and clogged his energies. He rose to his feet and shook himself.

“You have overlooked one thing, my Nimble Dodger,” he said between his teeth, “and that is your dupe, Buggs. You have entirely failed to assess the mental equipment of Buggs at its true value. A little training and he will make an incomparable sleuth. And he knows you and your ways down to the ground. You have never found a disguise yet that he hasn’t penetrated. He trailed you all over France and Belgium and half of Europe besides. Just as you thought yourself safely and permanently established as Charles Bowen, there was Buggs sniffing at your heels. He has the scent and tenacity of the bloodhound, and, moreover, he is ready to hate you. Henceforth, I shall take pains to ‘feed fat the ancient grudge’ he bears you; and Buggs it shall be for you, from this time forth and forevermore.”

Capwell’s reaction was instantaneous. His disappointment went far deeper than the humiliation caused by the loss of prestige of “Hundred per cent Capwell,” as he was familiarly called in the profession. It was the failure itself, the momentary sickening conviction that he was a “back number.”

He was too mentally robust, however, to harbor for long such a destructive thought; and his agile brain presently began to function normally. He accepted as an omen this sudden obtrusion of Buggs into his thoughts. Why not train Buggs to run the villain down? The fellow’s confine-

ment in jail was only temporary. A mere payment of a fine, and a judicious holding the sword of Damocles over his head, and Buggs was his forever. The feasibility of the plan grew upon him, and, characteristically with Capwell, the thought resulted in prompt action.

He found Buggs sullen and resentful. But after he had gone through the necessary formalities for his release, he melted to the extent of being suspiciously grateful to his visitor for saving him a sentence of sixty days on the Island. He stoically accepted the good meal provided for him, and resignedly submitted to the Turkish bath, the barber's manipulations, and the offices of the tailor. It was a new and almost self-respecting Buggs that presented himself at Capwell's office to learn the next step in this remarkable turn in his affairs.

Capwell surveyed him with satisfaction. The self-esteem engendered by the improvement in his personal appearance communicated itself to his muscles, and the upright, slouchless figure was scarcely recognizable as the slinking Buggs. Indeed, he was a very fair representative of the average citizen.

"Stand over here by the window," Capwell ordered. His manner was tense and eager.

Buggs darted a sidewise glance at the detective but obeyed with apparent phlegm.

"Gee! this is a new one on me," he reflected.



“I’ve had my picture took—taken,” he corrected himself, remembering his regenerated self, “and my finger prints are on file, but I’ll be everlastingly damned if I know what this one’s going to do to me.”

Capwell was not concerned with Buggs’s reflections, but there was no single outward feature of the man that he was not taking account of—his height, the breadth of shoulders; he made him walk back and forth to observe his posture, gait, and general appearance. He studied the slope of the jaw, the way the ears set back, the straight nose curving neither upward nor downward. Nothing very noticeable in all these physical traits. His hair and eyes were without distinction—neither brown nor black—just hair and eyes.

There was one feature, however, that bothered him. The lower lip closed over the upper one, giving him a somewhat impudent, not to say belligerent, expression. This feature Capwell found disconcerting. It was the only outstanding characteristic of the whole personality. It marked him unmistakably. All else was commonplace in the extreme—a blank surface on which Capwell could stamp what impress he liked. He would have been glad had this been otherwise. In the midst of his regret his subconsciousness began to clamor for attention.

“Dr. Victoire, Dr. Victoire,” it reminded him.



“Dr. Victoire,” he repeated aloud. “Buggs, did you ever hear of Dr. Victoire?”

“Sure, he’s the guy—I mean—yes, I have heard of him. He is the great doctor that makes over faces. Takes plaster casts, and wires up your teeth and yanks your face all round where it ought to be—in case you’ve got a face that ain’t right. He’s in that big office building for doctors over in Forty-first Street.” Buggs supplied this information with the air of one thoroughly acquainted with many phases of life in the big city.

“To be sure,” ejaculated Capwell. “He’s the famous orthodontist who invented appliances for correcting all sorts of troubles caused by refractory teeth. Let me look at your jaw, Buggs—turn this way.”

Buggs submitted with ill-concealed pugnacity. His jaw had always suited him. It wasn’t handsome, he’d admit, but, such as it was, it was his own property, as Capwell would damned well find out if he attempted to monkey with his jaw.

And Capwell was saying to himself: “That jaw is hung all right. That protruding lip is a malformation caused by his teeth. By God! I’ll have every tooth in his head yanked out if necessary,” he swore savagely.

They stared at each other, and each saw antagonism in the other’s eyes. Capwell quickly recovered himself.

“Now, sit down, Buggs, and let’s get down to brass tacks. Have a cigar and make yourself comfortable.” Buggs’s eye lighted with satisfaction as he observed the name of the brand of the delectable cigar it was going to be his good fortune to enjoy. He managed to suppress his eagerness, and with the fragrant weed between his lips, he leaned back in a comfortable leather chair and forgot for a moment that his jaw bone was presently going to be awarded as a prize to the best fighter.

Capwell, too, smoked in silence for awhile.

Presently he said, “You never made a very successful criminal, did you, Buggs?”

Buggs’s eyes narrowed resentfully. He framed the words: “What the hell’s that to you?” but he realized in time that this was the wrong man to confront with that question, so he said nothing.

“The reason I mention it,” went on Capwell, casually, watching the floating ribbon of smoke, “is that you couldn’t in the nature of things succeed in that line of business. You were never meant for it. You have none of the earmarks of the criminal. All the apparent marks were acquired. How did you happen to choose that for a career, Buggs?”

Capwell tapped the ash from the end of his cigar, and held it poised in his hand, regarding the glowing tip instead of his visitor’s face.

Buggs eyed him suspiciously.

“Do you mind telling me what your game is, boss?” he questioned.

“Not in the least,” responded Capwell. “That is what I brought you here for.” He bent his eyes keenly on the other’s face while he slowly and distinctly explained.

“I have discovered that there is a gentleman variously known as Gentleman Jim—Charles Bowen—The Nimble Dodger—and so forth, et cetera, that you and I have an equal amount of love for. My game is for you and me to pool our interests and run him down. How does that strike you?”

Buggs became alive at once. His eyes held a look of concentrated venom.

“Do you mean that, boss? I’ll chase him through hell for you,” he said eagerly.

“We have both chased him through hell already, and he’s still ahead of us, and out of sight,” said Capwell dryly. “We’ve got to change our methods completely, don’t you see?”

Buggs didn’t see, and so politely refrained from saying that he did. But he sensed that some great good luck was coming his way in what disguise he couldn’t, at the moment, conjecture.

“You don’t understand, I see. Well, Buggs, how would you like to be my partner in the hunt for your old friend of many names?”

“Your partner!” Buggs gasped. “All you know about me? And—and—my picture in the



Rogues' gallery—and my record—” For a moment his face glowed with the hope of a new deal, but the light died out almost immediately. “Hell! You’re stringing me,” he said, springing to his feet.

Capwell waved an admonitory hand at him and motioned him back to his seat.

“Now, now, don’t be rash,” he abjured, “and let’s drop the past out of sight. You’ve nothing hanging over you at present, and you’re as free as I am. Would you *like* to see your old friend behind the bars?”

“I’d like to poke fire in hell to roast him—the damned—”

Capwell enjoyed the fanatical glow in his new partner’s eyes, but he interrupted the flow of language about to follow.

“Oh, stow it, stow it,” he admonished laughingly. “First catch him—catch him, you understand.”

“God! that’s dead easy,” replied Buggs, dropping back into his chair. “He’s never got so far away that I didn’t catch him. It may take time, but I can find him. I was going on his trail, anyway. That’s my life job. That’s what he let himself in for when he double-crossed me. I learned a few tricks from him, and I ain’t never paid him in full yet.”

Capwell relished the ominous gleam in the fellow’s eyes.



“How were you going?” he asked. “Tramp it?”

“Hell, yes,” replied Buggs. “I ain’t got money to go no other way; but I got all the time they is.” His fingers were twitching menacingly. “I ain’t saying what I’m going to do to him when I ketch up with him this time, neither,” he added.

Capwell thought he could guess his intention without further explanation. The fellow’s mood was quite to his liking. An excellent tool for his purpose.

“I like your spirit, Buggs, but your method can be improved upon,” he said. “In the first place, tramping is too slow, and too conspicuous. It is among the tramps and the jail-birds he will be looking for you. So we must put you in the most unlikely place he would expect to find you. We must make a gentleman of you, Buggs.”

“Holy Cripes, man,” gasped Buggs, with bulging eyes. “How the hell you going to do it?”

Capwell roared with laughter.

## CHAPTER XXVIII

### THE BATTLE OF THE JAW BONE

**B**UGGS presently caught the contagion of the detective's laughter, and when convinced that he was not the subject of ridicule, laughed with him.

"Some job, you'll have to admit, eh?" he said.

"Not so much of a much as one might think at a first glance," said Capwell. "There's only that protruding lower lip of yours."

"You can quit on that before you begin," said Buggs sharply. "I ain't agoing to have my jaw monkeyed with. It takes more'n one jaw to make a gentleman, and you'd better begin somewheres else."

He became at once the outcast Buggs. His chin rested on his chest, and he glowered out of the same upturned sullen eyes that Capwell had encountered in the prison.

"Sit up," commanded Capwell sharply.

Buggs reluctantly straightened.

"That's the worst thing about you, Buggs. You *slink*. That's a confession of failure in itself. Does Gentleman Jim ever *slink*? Not on your life! We'd have caught him long ago if he sulked and glowered and snarled like an ugly cur."

Buggs made no reply.

"I don't think I can trust you, anyway," Capwell goaded. "You talk big about what you're going to do when you get him, but it's all brag. If you were face to face with the damned crook this minute and he said "Boo!" to you, you'd slink into a corner and beg him to kick you. You're a damned coward, Buggs."

Capwell noted with satisfaction that the shaft had gone home. Buggs flushed and then turned white, while his hands tightly gripped the arms of his chair, as if to keep him from avenging the insult. Capwell waited for him to speak.

After a moment his fingers relaxed and he spoke quietly.

"You're right, boss. I ain't had no luck, and I'm down and out. If you always get the raw end of the deal—every time, never missing, you lose your nerve after a while. All you can do when you're flung in a corner is just to snarl and bite if you can."

"That's all right," agreed Capwell, "but what I'm kicking about is that you snarl and bite when you're not in a corner. Did I have you in a corner just now? Was I giving you the raw end of the deal?"

"As to that," said Buggs, "you know damn well you had me in a corner, or you wouldn't have had the nerve to ask me to have my jaw bone busted."

“And again, as to that,” said Capwell, “you must admit that that same jaw bone is not an asset, but a liability. You carry on your face a ticket to jail that is visible from the Bronx to the Bowery. And then you cuss me out when I tell you a way to get rid of it. What do you hang around New York for, anyway, with that jaw of yours known to every cop in the city? I can’t understand your mental processes.”

Capwell saw the blood again flush to his face, and then leave it.

“You know damn well why I’m in New York,” he muttered. “I followed Gentleman Jim.”

“So you did, and what the hell good did it do you? That face of yours queered you, and you spent your time in jail while he was eating pie at the Vanderbilt. That so?”

“I didn’t do nothin’ to be jailed for, so help me,” he muttered, drawing his black brows together and immediately restoring them to their normal position.

“That’s better,” said Capwell, noting the self-control indicated by the gesture. “That’s what I’m telling you. You don’t have to do anything. That jaw of yours is a free meal ticket anywhere from Blackwells Island to Sing Sing.”

Buggs considered.

“What’s the idea, then?” he asked.

“My one idea—my only aim in life,” said Capwell gravely, “is to capture this devilish crook.



I'd cheerfully become a hideous dwarf to accomplish my object. Now you—you can locate him without disguise, but you can't hold him. He has played clownish tricks on me, and he despises you. I want him to know in his last hour that Capwell, whom he flouted, used Buggs, whose value he reckons at zero, to bring him down." Capwell's mouth closed so tightly that the color fled from his lips, leaving a white surface on the hardened muscles.

"And you want to do it with my jaw bone," murmured Buggs.

"Exactly that," said Capwell.

"Well, it won't be the first time the jaw bone of an ass got in some good work," said Buggs with a twisted smile.

Capwell followed up the half-concession implied in the remark.

"Buggs, as *Buggs* you admit you're a failure. You've no more talent for burglary than you have for preaching. You've got into the wrong pew. That's the matter with you. The only thing for you to do is to break away completely from your present life, and the only way to do that is to change your identity. And that's dead easy. Change your face, wear good clothes, live in a decent place, have a steady job with plenty of money, and forget your old pals, and your old haunts. Think what it will mean to you, man,

to walk the streets without ducking every time you see a cop. Think of it, Buggs.”

Capwell was observing the effect of his words as he talked. A growing hope manifested itself in Buggs’s features for a moment, and then faded away.

“You know I ain’t got no money to change my face,” he said despondently. “I’ve heard of that guy. He don’t touch a case for less than a thousand dollars. And how do I know how I’m going to look when he gets through with me?”

“You won’t care how you look so that you *don’t* look like that picture in the Rogues’ Gallery—in other words, so that you don’t look like Buggs. As for the money, you’re my partner. There is a big reward out for Gentleman Jim, and you’re going to get him. Alive, you understand.”

Buggs struggled between the desire to shuffle off the wretched misery of his present life and his dismay at losing his familiar physiognomy.

“It’s just a choice between your being the under or upper dog in your next meeting with Gentleman Jim.”

Capwell’s words supplied the necessary weight to tip the beam.

“It’s a go,” said Buggs.

“Good,” said Capwell, heartily. “Now, then, there ain’t going to be no failure this time. It’ll take a long, long time, but—”

He surveyed Buggs again. "You're sure you can find him?" he said.

"Oh, hell! That don't worry me none. Never has. Only trouble is he always gets the best of me when I do find him. When I get my hands on him this time, I'm going to croak him."

"Oh, no! Oh, no! That's too easy," remonstrated Capwell. "Any crook could do that. We'll decide what we are going to do with him later. Where did you mean to look for him first?"

"Toronto."

"Toronto! Did he really mean to go to Toronto?"

"Sure he did. What is there surprising in that?"

"Oh, nothing," said Capwell absently.

"What—what you thinking about, boss?"

"I was thinking that it was damned unfortunate that he should be in Toronto while you have to stay in New York for your treatment," said Capwell.

"Oh, well, for that matter, you needn't worry about that. 'Slong's you're in no hurry, you can wait for him here. He's sure to turn up here again as soon as this Bowen business blows over," said Buggs confidently.

"How do you know that?"

"Why, hell, I guess you couldn't a been born in New York, boss, or you wouldn't ask that question. If you're born in New York you can't help



coming back to it. Look at me! I can't stay away from it when I know I'm going to be kicked from pillar to post by every goddam cop in the place. And he has the damndest nerve. He'll walk into a restaurant some day and set down to the same table with you, and talk to you and you won't know it. New York is his beat. I know him. And I'll know *when* he comes. He knows he can't set down in no restaurant with me and fool me. He's more afraid of me than of any tec in the world."

"It's a wonder he hasn't killed you," said Capwell.

"He ain't a killer. Not to do the job himself. He's an actor more'n anything else. He likes makin' up and fooling people, but he has to get money, and so he gets it any way he can. He'd rather do some tomfoolery to get it, too, than to pick it up in the streets. But he's a skunk for meanness when it comes to divvyng up with a pal," he added reminiscently.

"Pal-ing with him hasn't been very profitable for you, has it?" said Capwell.

Buggs shook his head.

"I was as honest a lad as ever lived, too, before I fell for him. And when once you get down you can never get back," he added regretfully.

"This is going to be the exception that proves the rule. Bu—, by the way, what is your name?" Capwell asked abruptly.



Buggs, with quick suspicion, hesitated.

“It ain’t so bad a name, boss. My father is an honest man over in Brooklyn. I’m the only crook in the family. I’d rather not tell it, if you don’t mind.”

“But you can’t be called Buggs any longer. Buggs is going to die suddenly in the first suitable catastrophe that occurs and stay plumb dead forever and ever. I’d begin my new life with my own name if I were you. You’ll have something worth living up to then. What name shall you call yourself when you visit Dr. Victoire?”

The outcast rose and straightened himself to his full height.

“Robert Dill,” he said confidently.

## CHAPTER XXIX

### COMING EVENTS CAST SHADOWS

**K**INGDON DARROW, younger son of Arthur Witherell Darrow, Lord Hermiston, Sussex, England, hung up his hat and overcoat in the anteroom of his superb apartment in the Benedict, the most exclusive bachelor residence in New York. Then he punched a switch button, thereby softly illuminating the handsome bachelor's living room into which he entered. There was evidence of taste in the Persian carpet, the simple lines of old Chippendale, and in the few good copies of English prints adorning the walls. The Dresden shepherdesses on the mantel and a cabinet of curios containing quaint English silver with ancient hall-marks, betrayed a distinctly English taste. The books which filled a low bookcase against the wall bore the names of English authors, and on the table lay copies of the *London Times* and the *Oxford Literary Review*.

In spite of these evidences of luxury and ease, Kingdon Darrow did not appear altogether happy. He passed his hand over a slightly frowning brow, and thrust agitated fingers through his

exceedingly blond hair. His blue eyes held an almost apprehensive expression. As if to shake off an unpleasantly obtruding thought he shrugged his shoulders a trifle impatiently and threw himself into a chair near the table. Some letters had been left in his absence, small, square envelopes indicating invitations—nothing of importance. He toyed absently with the paper cutter the while his thoughts seemed to be engaged elsewhere. Presently, with a gesture of annoyance, he thrust his hand into an inside pocket and drew forth a thin, fragrant Morocco leather case. His slender white fingers sought and found what he was looking for. It was a newspaper clipping, not a recent one apparently, and the information it gave could certainly bear no relation to this favored son of ancient family.

The clipping ran:

#### Disastrous Fire in Lodging House.

A fire of unknown origin broke out at two o'clock this morning in the cheap lodging-house known as the Owl. It was frequented by derelicts, more especially by men of low intelligence, used as the tools of more brainy criminals.

The fire swept through the open dormitory, and before the panic-stricken sleepers could file down the narrow stairway, those in the rear were caught in the flames. Several of the victims were recognized by the police. Among them Jack the Rogue, once a well-known character to the police; Frank Crispini, the gunman, implicated in the

Joyce case, and Buggs, an ex-jail-bird, who disappeared from New York during the war, but recently appeared to swell the ranks of the underworld.

The slender fingers held the paper for some time; then they seized a match, and, holding the clipping over an ash-tray, applied the flame, and the blue eyes above the fingers watched it turn to ashes.

Then Kingdon Darrow rose impatiently and shook himself vigorously. He walked over to a mirror and surveyed himself. What he saw was a young, good-looking man dressed in evening clothes which became him well. His very blond hair and blue eyes were almost a Swedish type, but when he placed a monocle in his eye he was distinctly British.

"Idiot!" he said, addressing himself. "What's the matter with you? Why should a stupid, ignorant priest get on your nerves? He didn't look like Buggs. He didn't act like Buggs. And, yet, I had the same creepy sensation that Buggs, and no other man in the world, aroused in me."

He paced the floor, ruminating.

"I've thought he was dead before, but he has apparently as many lives as a cat. However, if the police recognized him, he must be dead this time for sure. Besides, he has never lost my trail for fourteen months before. Yes, he's dead, all right, and I'm a fool."



Relieved, he walked over to the table and picked up a package of cigarettes. In reaching for matches, his hand upset a photograph in a silver frame. Laughingly he took it up and held it in both hands before him.

“Charming Sylvia, I apologize,” he laughed.

The frame contained the photograph of a woman about twenty-five, handsome in a way, the mouth a trifle voluptuous, the eyes sophisticated if not bold. She was dressed in a low-cut gown, with too many jewels for the strictest good taste.

“Sweet Sylvia,” he repeated. “I wonder what Eleanor would think of you. You’d think her rather tame, of course. But you can put it all over her. You certainly are a bewitching widow. I wonder how many packages of Wright’s Pepsin Gum went to the purchase of that necklace. If I were a statistician or a mathematician now I might figure out the amount of energy consumed by all the jaws that worked for that charming adornment for you and more especially for Me—for in one week—one little week, Charming Sylvia—you and your bank-roll will be mine. I hope you won’t ask me about my past. But, as for that, women never do worry about a man’s past except in regard to other women, and I haven’t been a sinner in that respect. I never robbed a woman of her honor.”

He placed the photograph on the table and

lighted his cigarette. Then, as it was nearing one o'clock, he prepared for bed.

All of which goes to show that the erstwhile Charles Bowen, as Buggs had predicted, had returned to New York, and, assured of no further blackmailing visits from Buggs, had been living there in a new rôle, in fancied security for many months.

The immediate cause of his sharp reminder of Buggs was that on this evening, as he picked up his change in a subway booth, an arm brushed his sleeve and a hand containing a nickel was thrust through the ticket window. He moved away, at the same time glancing at the stranger. He gave an involuntary start and the blood left his face, for, at first, he thought he was gazing into the face of Buggs. But it was, instead, a harmless priest whose eyes met his in unrecognizing apology.

He shook off the feeling and proceeded to call on Sylvia. Sylvia was moved to go to a benefit concert for the Children's Village, which was to be patronized by society leaders of a philanthropical turn of mind, and to which Sylvia had contributed a generous check. Accordingly they went to the concert, and directly beneath their box, in direct range of their eyes, sat the priest, his tonsure visible as he bent over his program.

Again he had that unaccountable unpleasant sensation which only Buggs had power to stir in

him. Furtively he studied the priest's face through Sylvia's opera glass. No, it couldn't be Buggs. The pugnacious lower lip was lacking. Lacking, too, the furtive sidelong glances between lowered lids. Furthermore, by no stretch of the imagination could he visualize Buggs sitting at ease in an audience of respectable law-abiding people. He dismissed the thought.

But now, arrayed in silken pajamas and lying on the bed, he could not prevent the thought returning. Sleep refused to visit him, while over and over again with that devilish persistency peculiar to unwelcome thoughts at night, past episodes involving Buggs recurred to him.

There was that moment when Buggs discovered him posing as Charles Bowen, the harassing days that followed, the peculiar characteristic of the fellow that while you counted him least among the creatures that crawled the earth, and assured yourself that by no possibility could he become an active factor in your affairs after you had used him and cast him off, he had power in his very nihility to move you as no other creature could. He always managed to queer everything. There was the matter of the ten thousand dollars he had drawn for him on Jasper Bowen's forged signature—the bribe which Buggs had demanded as the price of his leaving the country—and which he, himself, had so clumsily lost in his rapid change of clothes that night at Globe Hollow.



He supposed that he had given the poor devil the raw deal. He wondered if he had underestimated him. Such persistency as he had might, perhaps, have been used to better purpose, but he was so confoundedly docile, so "sticky" when you had no use for him that you loathed him and just had to kick him. But he was dead now, and no harm done. Just like him to be last in the fire line in that filthy lodging-house and get caught. Why didn't he jump on their necks and trample the dirty gang under his feet and get out? Well, he was glad he didn't. Glad he was dead. He would think no more about him. He turned his pillow and composed himself for sleep; but his consciousness refused to part with Buggs. Over and over again the episodes repeated themselves; and he was obliged to turn his pillow many times before he found oblivion.

## CHAPTER XXX

### AN IMPATIENT BRIDEGROOM

THE morning found him unrefreshed. He showered, shaved, and dressed. His sumptuously served breakfast restored him in a degree. He convinced himself that the premonition which he was unable to shake off was due to his forthcoming interview with Sylvia. For he had to get money from Sylvia for their wedding expenses, and that process involved some lying. Not that lying troubled his conscience. Lying was the easiest thing he could do. But if Sylvia, with thrifty foresight, should decide to postpone the wedding until his delayed (?) funds should arrive and should refuse to be swayed by his passionate assurances that he *could* not, *would* not wait another day for the happiness she had promised him, it was going to put him to some inconvenience to threaten suicide and perform all the dramatics he had at his command. He was frowning a bit at the prospect of all this boredom when he bought his ticket in the subway. He turned with the ticket in his hand, and started back with a suppressed oath as he again encountered the priest. The priest was carefully selecting a nickel

from the coins in his hand, but looked up with mild surprise for a moment, and again turned his attention to the absorbing occupation of sorting out the required nickel.

The usual crowd of frantic ticket-seekers immediately separated them, but Kingdon Darrow turned his head apprehensively over his shoulder before he boarded the uptown express. He bit his lip with vexation at the perturbation this stupid old priest was causing him. To divert his mind he picked up a morning paper some messenger had left in his seat, and the first thing his eye encountered was a headline:

“The Jasper Bowen Residence Sold.”

With a crooked smile he read the paragraph. Mrs. Wayne Merriman, it seemed, was realizing a fortune on the sale. The article went on to revive the tale of the old man's tragic death at Globe Hollow. He cast the paper from him without reading that part. He had no wish to recall that ghastly experience which only the direst extremity had forced him into. And it had failed after all. It was an acrid memory. An inauspicious day, he thought, what with this recall of his most prodigious failure following the bad dreams of the night, and the haunting presence of this miserable priest. Was this encounter with him at the moment he was setting out on a preda-



tory expedition an omen of failure? Like all gamblers he had a strong vein of superstition in his nature.

He found Sylvia alone and unusually sweet and gracious.

"Sylvia, dear," he said, "I have just learned some very disturbing news. The old solicitor who has done business for my father for a generation has most inconveniently died."

"Now, don't tell me you are going to put on mourning for him and postpone our wedding. Is that the custom in England?" she inquired anxiously.

"No, indeed, but it is very unfortunate that this should occur with our wedding only a week off," he said.

"Only six days," she corrected him; "but why introduce a death at our wedding feast?"

"Because—well, the truth is, Sylvia, he died before he advanced my allowance, and you must admit that's an awkward situation for a bridegroom," he laughed with an embarrassed air.

"Oh, Kingdon, what *are* we going to do? The invitations are out; and the house is leased and the servants discharged. I can't stay here. We *must* be married on the day set."

As she enumerated the reasons on her side for not postponing the wedding the gravity of the situation grew upon her.

“But your funds may come yet, don’t you think so?” she inquired anxiously.

“No hope of it,” he declared dejectedly. “You don’t know the English customs. Of course it will come some time, and plenty of it. My father is very generous with me, but it is absolutely useless to hope for it immediately. I can’t tell you how humiliated I am over this situation, Sylvia.”

She was touched by his distress and hastened to say:

“I’ll have to telegraph father, that is all,” she declared.

“If you love me you won’t telegraph your father,” he hurriedly expostulated.

“Well, what *shall* we do? We’ve just got to do something,” she maintained. “Would you accept a loan from me?” she inquired, doubtfully, as he made no reply but sat with his elbows resting on his knees, his chin in his hand, gazing dejectedly at the rug at his feet.

“How could you ask me such a thing, dear? You know it is impossible,” he murmured. “And especially since you would have to take your father into your confidence,” he added. “I couldn’t stand that humiliation.”

“Oh, I wouldn’t have to ask father for it. I have plenty available. I only said that because I thought it would embarrass you less to take it

from a man than from a woman," she hastened to assure him.

"Not if you love the woman, dear," he said, looking up at her significantly.

"Well, then, that is settled," she said in relieved tones. "I can get all we want at once. How much would you need, Kingdon?"

"Fifty thousand is my quarterly allowance, and I had counted on having that much to use on our trip. I haven't bought our tickets yet. San Francisco, Japan, China, India—that's our route, isn't it? You haven't forgotten?" he said tenderly.

She laughed happily.

"Forgotten! Isn't that just like a man! They always forget anniversaries and things and they think we women forget our honeymoon plans."

"Well, if I am going to become a debtor to my wife, the sooner I make the fatal plunge, the better," he said gayly. "How soon could you get the money, Sylvia?"

"To-day, I think. I'm sure of it because my broker has just sold some securities. I told him I should need a little pocket money myself," she replied.

"That's fine," he said. "Now don't, for heaven's sake, tell your broker you are going to lend it to me. There's no need of emphasizing my embarrassing predicament."

"Of course not," she protested.



“Well, then, I’ll come around for it this evening. You’ll be sure to have it, won’t you? We have delayed too long already about the tickets.” He couldn’t keep the note of anxiety out of his voice.

“I’ll *surely* have it,” she promised him, laughing, “if I have to rob an orphan to get it.”

He left her shortly afterward, highly gratified with the success of his mission. He had named fifty thousand dollars only to impress her with his scale of living. He had faintly hoped to get ten thousand.

He was swinging himself breezily around the corner, congratulating himself on his good luck, when he nearly bumped into the now familiar figure of the priest, who was inoffensively engaged in putting a letter into the letter box.

His heart missed a beat.

“Damn the fellow,” he muttered. “I’ve a good mind to kick him.”

The priest was apparently oblivious of him. He didn’t even glance his way. The circumstance of meeting him again, however, became the nucleus of suspicion. Kingdon Darrow was too familiar with detectives and their ways not to know that one could see a man perfectly without looking at him. He became increasingly uneasy, and he hurried along the street unaware that his face had become white and drawn.

Once inside his own door, he locked and bolted

it. His nebulous suspicions rapidly solidified; and he was certain now that the hour was approaching when he would be again matching his wits against the police. He cursed himself for slackening up in his usual precautions. He had been unmolested for so long that he had become negligent. Buggs was dead. He had discounted Capwell because of his long inactivity in his case. Could any more harrowing climax be devised by a vicious fate than to be obliged to fly on the very eve of the greatest coup in his career? Sylvia with her ten millions ready, too ready, to drop into his arms. The pursuit had been so dead easy it had made him soft. All he had to do was to be passive and let Sylvia pursue him. She would have some chase, he sneeringly reflected, after the knot was tied.

Well, he must brace up. He would get the fifty thousand dollars to-night and beat it, and leave sweet Sylvia to console herself as best she could. If the detectives were really on his trail they knew he would not decamp before the date set for his wedding. He knew the beastly tribe. They would think it dramatic to take him "on the eve of his wedding to the wealthy widow." Well, he'd fool them. To-morrow morning the priest would be wasting his nickels and his time in the subway. Sylvia would be vainly telephoning, and the swarm of detectives whom he believed now were surrounding him would be licking their chops in

anticipation of something that wasn't going to happen.

He would make sure of that fifty thousand; fool that he was for not doing it before, but he hadn't thought Sylvia such an easy mark. He chafed at the time intervening between him and that blessed roll. He hoped it was old Capwell setting the stage for his capture, but he didn't believe Capwell would ever cross swords with him again. Poor old Capwell, he would naturally become a back number after the fiasco he made of his last attempt. How they must have geyed him at headquarters. He hadn't seen his name mentioned since. Well, whoever it was, he must be making tracks.

His mental machinery never worked better than when stimulated by the knowledge that he was pursued. His zest for the game was as keen as that of a lad at football. He had an inborn affinity with deception in any form. He loved a circus clown, a prestidigitator, a hypnotist, a ventriloquist, or a fake medium, all of whose artifices he had learned in his day. Anything that fooled a gullible public made an abnormal appeal to him.

Had it not been for an irresistible urge towards a criminal career, the stage would have been a good medium for his peculiar gifts. That field, however, was too circumscribed for him. He needs must have the whole world for his stage and on that he had played many parts.



He had become famous, elusive, mysterious. Many times the police had gathered sufficient evidence against him to place him behind steel bars, but they were always a fraction of a second too late. At the very moment that they had his identity established, the man they sought was nonexistent. And it had been such fun—mostly.

He had never had trusted accomplices. That was too dangerous. When he could not handle a job alone, he had found one or more tools for the occasion only. He had never held them into his next incarnation.

Only that infernal leech, Buggs. Him he could never elude. Buggs had known him in their boyhood days when they attended the same public school in Brooklyn; and by some devilish instinct supposed to be possessed only by dogs, Buggs had invariably sniffed him out and hounded him through all his career. He had used him, had sent him on expeditions purposely designed to end his miserable life, only to find him later resurrected, sitting on his haunches as it were, penetrating with his dog-like gaze his most impervious incognito. Sometimes he had thrown him a propitiatory bone, as was his intention in the Bowen case. He had drawn the ten thousand dollars for Buggs, and he believed that would quiet him for some time. When the Bowen millions were actually in his possession, the tables would be turned and he would have had the power to denounce him

as a dangerous lunatic if he had ever appeared again.

But he was dead now. That was a comfort. He would never have had to serve that term at Atlanta had it not been for Buggs. The hound had always appeared just before a catastrophe. It had become a natural sequence of events—Buggs—suspicion—disclosure—disaster.

And now that he was dead that same sequence was imminent. Though he had not appeared in the flesh, his dog-gone ghost was sitting outside on its haunches, staring, staring with unwinking eyes. The thought frenzied him. With blazing eyes he looked about for an object upon which to vent his wrath. His eye fell upon an inoffensive footstool. He drew back his polished boot and kicked the stool with such force that it rose in the air, resented the blow with a counter attack on the gilded mirror, which crashed and fell into a thousand glistening pieces on the floor.

He fell back aghast. Another omen of ill luck. The blood was pounding in his veins. He sank into the deep embrace of an easy chair, and attempted to pull himself together. He had never been this way before. The zest of the comedy of impersonation and the baffling of his pursuers had heretofore more than compensated him for his perilous position. He had been in tighter places than this before, and never turned a hair.

And, by God! he wouldn't, now. He turned

his back on the shattered mirror, however, as he rose, and entered his bedroom. From a closet he dragged forth a huge trunk which he unlocked, disclosing carefully folded costumes. One by one, he removed trays and examined costume after costume.

He removed his coat, and with it the thick padding which had given him the appearance of thick-shouldered stockiness. In his shirt he was lean and agile. His body was supple as a willow wand. He stretched his arm and watched with a satisfied smile the muscles of his wrist expand. Not even Lupin had anything on him in the way of expanding those muscles to accommodate themselves to handcuffs—nor of contracting them when convenient to throwing them off.

He turned again to the costumes, and his self-confidence began to return with the memories of the safety they had always brought. Here was an ice-man's outfit—the one in which he had escaped on an ice-wagon through a cordon of policemen, while the real ice-man lay bound and gagged inside the house. That disguise might come in handy again. Although he had always made it a point not to use the same disguise a second time. Aside from his vain love of playing many rôles, he did not think it expedient to use a disguise which he had made conspicuous.

Usually his decision was made instantly. But there was the money which he must have and he



must go to Sylvia as Kingdon Darrow. His resolve to beat it the instant the money was in his hands was definite. How he could enter Sylvia's house as Kingdon Darrow, and leave as another person was what he was pondering over. Sylvia was such a simpleton, she would swallow any tale he told her. All he had to do was to decide upon his disguise, take it along with him, and trust to his nimbleness of brain at the moment, and his ability to make lightning changes.

He began to whistle; then he hummed a favorite song:

“Jog on! jog on the foot-path way,  
And merrily hent the stile-a;  
A merry heart goes all the way,  
Your sad tires in a mile-a.”

## CHAPTER XXXI

### WILL YOU WALK INTO MY PARLOR?

**B**UT the whistle and the words of the song were insufficient to dispel his sense of impending danger. The ardent pursuit of Sylvia's dollars, together with his long immunity from the police, had contributed to a slight, almost unconscious, letting down of his guard.

He cursed himself roundly for his carelessness. He cursed Sylvia for dallying about the wedding. If she had been willing to be married quietly without fuss and feathers as he had tried to persuade her would be a romantic thing to do, he would be safely aboard a Pacific steamer by this time bound for pastures new, where he wouldn't grow crook-necked looking over his shoulder for a damned dick. He was getting tired of this life. He was entitled to a vacation and time to spend ten million dollars leisurely.

But—the situation being what it was, he must bestir himself and devise a way out. He was convinced now that they were on his trail; and that, undoubtedly, there were plain clothes men hanging around the Benedict this very moment. Hang it all, he would put it to the test! Leaving the

disguises, the separate parts of each one carefully placed together with no necessary detail misplaced or lacking, he left his bedroom, passed through the sitting-room out into the corridor, snatching his hat from a rack in the anteroom on his way.

He spoke good-naturedly to the elevator boy, and stepped out on the mosaic marble floor of the lobby with a sprightly and carefree air. Several well-dressed men, who might be residents of the Benedict, were standing around smoking and might be waiting for automobiles. Yes, there were a suspicious number of men there for this time of day. No doubt about that.

He asked a few questions of a uniformed attendant, leisurely lighted a cigarette, and strolled into the street. Two of the idlers chose that some moment to follow his example. Singularly, too, they went in his direction. Satisfied that they were detectives, he made a purchase at the corner drug store, and returned to the Benedict.

At sight of the man he had already carried up and down several times that morning, the elevator boy's face took on the expression signifying "Can you beat it?" but he resignedly took his place in the corner and released the spring.

As the elevator shot upward, bearing with it the golden hair crowning the handsome, pale face crisscrossed by the steel bars, a quiet, keen-looking man with gray hair dropped the newspaper



which had concealed his face, and looked over the top of his spectacles. Another man in an overcoat and hat whose impatient remarks about the tardiness of his automobile had abruptly ceased with the disappearance of the elevator, caught the look.

Jerking his head briefly in the direction of the elevator shaft, the man behind the newspaper addressed the other laconically:

“Steel bars rather becoming to him, eh, what?”

“You got that, too, did you?” said the other with quick comprehension.

Kingdon Darrow returned to his room perfectly aware that he was under surveillance, but aware, too, that for some reason the arrest would not be made immediately. He attributed the delay to the lack of sufficient proof of his identity.

Since the detectives did not arrest him when he was absolutely in their hands, he counted on immunity for the rest of the day, anyway; possibly longer. As his coming marriage to Sylvia was no secret, they would naturally not expect him to decamp before that took place.

Well, it was a desperate chance, but he must get that fifty thousand and beat it this very night. He would go to Sylvia's as Kingdon Darrow, and emerge another person. Who should he be? He might have Sylvia send for a messenger or even for a policeman—that would be a good idea—send for a policeman, slug him and get his uni-

form—or call in the fire department. Why, there were a dozen ways, he exultingly assured himself, especially with Sylvia so deucedly unsuspecting.

It was with a fair degree of confidence, then, that he changed to evening clothes and leisurely, though cautiously, made his way to Sylvia's. He stopped at the florist's and purchased a bunch of roses, which he took with him.

He reached her door without detention, and patted his pocket confidently while waiting for his ring to be answered. Sylvia, herself, her face glowing with pleasure, opened the door.

He thrust the box of roses into her hand and hung his hat on the rack.

"Did you get the money, Sylvia?" he inquired eagerly, following her into the drawing-room.

"Is that all you care for me?" she rallied. "Before you have even kissed me or noticed the gown I am wearing for your benefit, you ask about the money. Don't you adore me in this gown, Kingdon?"

"I adore you in anything, and too well you know it," he replied gallantly. "It is only because I am afraid of losing you that I asked about the money."

"That's more like it!" she exclaimed. "Now, let's see what's in the box. Oh, Gloire de Dijons! What exquisite taste you have, Kingdon. Thank you so much."

She took the fragrant roses from their tissue paper, and rang for a servant to bring vases, while he nervously lighted a cigarette and waited in tense impatience.

Since fifty thousand dollars had seemed to her a reasonable amount to ask for, he had quickly accustomed himself to think that he could not very well do with less.

He forced himself to restrain his impatience while she was busy with the roses, exclaiming over their beauty and fragrance.

A servant entered the room.

"Dennis," said Sylvia, "please bring me one of the crystal bowls with water in it for these darling roses."

"Yes, miss," said Dennis, and backed out.

"Who the deuce is that?" demanded Kingdon Darrow, uneasily.

"That? Oh, you mean the new butler?" she murmured absently. "His name is Dennis."

"Yes, I heard you call him Dennis, but where did you get him?" he demanded in an irritated tone.

"Why, Kingdon, I believe you're cross," she said, looking up at him.

"Well, who wouldn't be cross?" he muttered. "That's the second question I've asked you in the last five minutes that you haven't condescended to answer."

"Oh, forgive me, dear; Dennis is nothing to



quarrel over. He is an old servant of Jasper Bowen, you know that old man that was found burned to death—”

“Good God, Sylvia! What do you want to talk about such horrible things for? Do you call that answering my question? I want to know how you happen to have him.”

“Well, I *haven't* got him, if that is what you want to know. Father has him. This house belongs to the Jasper Bowen estate and father has leased it. And Dennis and Ann are protégés of Mrs. Colonel Merriman—a granddaughter or something of old Jasper Bowen. You should see Ann, Kingdon.”

“What in the world do I want to see Ann for?” he exclaimed testily. “Sylvia, dear, I don't think you realize how very unhappy it makes me—this being out of funds just when I need them most. Why can't you relieve my mind at once? Forgive me if I seem insistent.”

“To tell the truth, Kingdon, I'm as nervous as a witch about it myself.” She looked around as if to make sure they were alone and lowered her voice.

“I have the money, but I shall be relieved to get rid of it, I assure you.” She reached into her bosom and drew forth a key which she fitted to an inlaid desk near by. Then with another key she unlocked an inner drawer and drew forth a sheaf of bills.

“There it is,” she said with a sigh of relief. “Fifty thousand dollars.”

He took it eagerly and placed it hastily in an inside pocket.

“Thank you, dear,” he said. “You shall have it back with interest many times compounded when my ship comes in.”

“I have had the queerest feeling about it, Kingdon. I have been absolutely upset,” she said, glancing apprehensively at the windows.

“What do you mean by that?” he asked quickly. “Has anything happened?”

“Nothing has really happened,” she explained, “but while I was in the bank I seemed to be shadowed by a queer-looking priest. I went into the ladies’ room, and drew the money from the window there, and you know how that window is in the Columbia Bank—at a right angle to one of the teller’s windows outside. Any one standing at that window can see any transaction that takes place. When the money was being counted out, I looked up and a priest seemed to be boring his eyes into me. I have seen him around here before, I am sure. I believe he’s a burglar.”

She failed to notice the start he gave, and went on:

“There have been strange people hanging about here this afternoon, suspicious-looking men—two of them across the street; and Dennis reported a

man to the police for being in the court at the back of the house."

"What did the officer do?" demanded Kingdon Darrow apprehensively.

"Why, he chased him out, and I asked him if he wouldn't telephone to headquarters for a special guard for this house to-night."

"And he did so?" Kingdon Darrow gasped.

"Yes, indeed, he did. Two plain clothes men came and questioned me; and I told them not to let anybody come or go from here to-night except you, and to keep a special guard over you. It isn't so much the loss of the money—but what if they should—kill you—to get it?"

She turned white at the thought, but not whiter than he did. She had surrounded him with the police, and made it impossible for him to evade them. They had orders to arrest anybody except him; therefore no disguise would avail. They wouldn't take him in the house; but they would capture him as soon as he left it. There was no doubt in his mind about that. The place was swarming with them, he knew.

The only possible exit for him was the roof. He could climb like a cat, and spring across chasms where he was sure no man could follow him; and if they shot him—well, better that than what awaited him if captured.

"Sylvia, dear," he said, calmly, "you're all up-



set and nervous, and I'm going to leave you. I'll go directly to my rooms, and telephone you the moment I get there that I am safe."

"I wish you would, Kingdon," she said. "I shall not rest until I know you're safe."

"Neither shall I rest until I know you are free from worry. I'll wait here until you go up to your room. Say good night now, dear, and let me see you waving a farewell to me from the top of the stairs."

She needed no urging. She threw him a kiss from the top of the stairs, and he heard her door close and the bolt of the lock as it shot into place.

Then he cautiously ascended the stairs and passed up the second flight. At the top of the latter, he ran squarely into Dennis. In an instant his revolver was leveled at Dennis's eyes.

"Go ahead of me to the roof," he ordered. "At the first sound you make you're a dead man."

"Better not go to the roof, Mr. Charles," said Dennis calmly. "There's two of 'em up there sitting on the trap door playing with guns."

"Then go down ahead of me." The words left his lips with the speed of thought and Dennis was passing down with the agility of a monkey before he had time to consider, Kingdon Darrow close on his heels.

"Now open the door," came the sharp staccato command, "and pass out ahead of me."

With the muzzle of the revolver pressed against his back, Dennis obeyed in silence.

Over the threshold he stopped at the command of "Halt!"

"Now, gentlemen," announced Darrow to apparently empty space, "at the first attempt to lay hands on me, I shall kill this man."

The words had scarcely left his lips when a shot rang out and the hand that held his revolver dropped limply.

Scarcely, however, had the gun which dropped from his hand reached the granite step when Kingdon Darrow had dropped to a crouching attitude and leaped suddenly forward, and without a second's pause made another similar forward motion, avoiding the bullets that sped after him. Then with magnificent speed he loped along, animal-like, crouching low down and zigzagging with each bound. The luminous haze half veiling the street was rent by the flashing of many pistols, the reports overlapping each other; and still he ran on.

Then the sudden din was succeeded by an equally sudden silence, for Kingdon Darrow, the unconquerable "Nimble Dodger" lay sprawling in the gutter in his immaculate evening clothes; and the smoke of many pistols was wafted away on an indifferent evening breeze.

## CHAPTER XXXII

### A LONG WAIT

**T**HE day following the arrest Capwell, hands clasped behind his head, swivel chair tilted back upon protesting springs, was leisurely watching through redolent wreaths of smoke an unaccustomed ray of sunlight which had surreptitiously stolen in and was dancing and flickering in fantastic shapes on the blank office wall, when a visitor was announced.

This proved to be a stranger by sight, but not by name, as Capwell found when he had introduced himself as Dougal Stewart of the Canadian plain clothes detective force.

“I say, Mr. Capwell,” he began before the introduction was quite completed; “I wanted that bird myself.”

“What bird?” inquired Capwell, his twinkling eyes denying the innocence his words implied.

“Why, that bird you arrested yesterday with as many names as the Prince of Wales,” replied the Canadian, unbuttoning his overcoat.

“Take him and welcome,” said Capwell, calling his visitor’s attention to a peg for his overcoat



and hospitably pushing the box of cigars toward him. "He's warbled his last song for me."

"Havanas, eh?" said the visitor, regarding the weed in his hand. "Lucky dog. I'll have to smoke ragweed now that I have lost this fellow. What are you going to do with him?"

"Who? Me?" laughed Capwell. "You don't think I've got that rattler mixed up with the loose change in my pocket, do you?"

The Canadian flipped the flame from a match and tossed it away.

"No," he said between puffs, "but I wonder how long before Canada can get his hide."

"Well, his hide was shot pretty full of holes last night; but it will mend, they tell me. I'm glad we didn't kill him. Now, if you ask me how long Canada will have to wait, I should conservatively estimate it until about the time hell freezes over," said Capwell judicially, resuming his seat and cigar.

"As bad as that?" laughed Stewart.

"Every bit," said Capwell decidedly, "and then some. What did you want him for, anyway?"

"Well, he played practically the same game in Toronto he did here. Posed as an American millionaire, was received in the best society; got engaged to a wealthy woman, and decamped with her jewels and a large sum of 'borrowed' money. That was the game he was playing with Jasper Bowen's niece, wasn't it?"

“Partly,” acknowledged Capwell, “only the girl didn’t fall for it. He was playing in the guise of the returned nephew for the Bowen estate. The old man died without making a will, and the faker impersonated him, made a will bequeathing the whole estate to himself, took the body in a trunk to Globe Hollow and cremated it, making it appear an accident, turned the girl penniless into the street, and was just about to realize on his investment when—” Capwell’s face darkened at the memory of what happened then.

“He got the laugh on you that time, didn’t he?” said the Canadian, smiling broadly.

“Y-e-s,” Capwell frankly admitted, “I’ll allow it was on me then, but it has turned out to be a half a dozen on him now. I was after him then, specifically, for forging Jasper Bowen’s name to checks; for forging Charles Bowen’s name in their endorsements; and for forging the will; as well as for removing and cremating a body without a permit. But now—” he shrugged his shoulders significantly and threw out his hands, palms upward.

“It was never quite clear in my mind,” said Stewart, “why you fellows didn’t get him that time.”

“All my fault,” acknowledged Capwell. “I was as greedy as the crook himself. I wasn’t satisfied with well enough. I wanted to bring in a charge of murder. I wasn’t sure he didn’t per-

suade the old man to make a will in his favor and then lure him to Globe Hollow and bump him off."

"And are you satisfied now that he didn't?" questioned his listener.

"Yes. It didn't take me long to clear up the mystery. I visited the house and interviewed old Jasper's man, and his testimony, together with the doctor's statement, convinced me that Jasper Bowen was dead before the will was made; and that 'Charles' impersonated him and made the will, and then had to devise a way to dispose of the body. Otherwise the autopsy would disclose the approximate time of the old man's death."

"So that clears up the Mystery of Globe Hollow? He put the body in a trunk and accompanied it himself?"

"Yes, impersonating old Jasper on the way. That man will impersonate somebody at his own funeral. I wasn't sure when I had him in the ambulance last night that he wouldn't turn into the Angel Gabriel like those dissolving pictures you see in the movies. Lucifer will have to be on his guard," he laughed whimsically, "when he knocks for admission at the gates of Hell, or he will convince him he belongs in the other place."

"He's some faker, all right," agreed the Canadian. "But what became of the Bowen girl?"

"She's in Coblenz just now, I believe, with her husband, Colonel Merriman, a fine fellow she met



on the other side. She inherited the whole estate—several millions. She disposed of that old Spook-shop on Fifth Avenue for a couple of millions. She never went into it again after ‘Cousin Charles’ occupied it. I guess old Jasper was enough to queer it without any outside help.”

“But, miser as he was, he fell for ‘Charles Bowen,’ didn’t he?”

“No, I don’t think he did unreservedly. The checks were all forged, and, of course, the forger saw to it that the canceled checks never fell into the old man’s hands. The rascal lived in clover while the girl hadn’t a cent. It came out afterward that the girl was entitled to a comfortable bit of money from her mother’s estate which old Jasper administered and confiscated.”

“Tough luck!” said the Canadian. “But as she is now on the road to living ‘happy ever after’ tell me how you got on the trail of Kingdon Darrow.”

“Ah,” said Capwell, “that’s another story.”

THE END









Deacidified using the Bookkeeper process  
Neutralizing Agent: Magnesium Oxide  
Treatment Date:



PRESERVATION TECHNOLOGIES, INC.  
111 Thomson Park Drive  
Cranberry Twp., PA 16066  
(412) 779-2111





**LIBRARY OF CONGRESS**



00014831484